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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PLAYING SOLITAIRE: CANADIAN WOMEN'S MONODRAMA

BY

PATRICIA LOUISE BADIR

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SPRING 1991

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PATRICIA LOUISE BADIR

11418-75 AVE
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Au fond, une femme qui parle seule
est toujours une femme qui s'attend à quelque chose de nouveau.

Nicole Brossard, France Théoret
Préface à La nef des sorcières.

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THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT THEY HAVE READ, AND RECOMMEND TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE, A THESIS ENTITLED PLAYING SOLITAIRE: CANADIAN WOMEN'S MONODRAMA.

SUBMITTED BY PATRICIA LOUISE BADIR IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

Carl Hare
CARL HARE

Mary L. Blackstone
DR. MARY BLACKSTONE

Moira Day
DR. MOIRA DAY

Claudine
DR. CLAUDINE POTVIN

To my parents, Toby, Lise Ann,
Mary, Moira and Claudine
for supporting me and my game of solitaire.

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to examine one woman plays by French and English Canadian women playwrights. The plays discussed are Diving by Margaret Hollingsworth, Preparing by Beverley Simons, Pink by Judith Thompson, Jewel by Joan MacLeod, The Occupation of Heather Rose by Wendy Lill, Inside Out by Pamela Boyd, La nef des sorcières by Nicole Brossard et al, Bien à moi by Marie Savard, Moman by Louisette Dussault, Florence-Geneviève-Martha by Jeanne-Mance Delisle, and Les vaches de nuit by Jovette Marchessault. The thesis deconstructs the dramatic and the performance texts of these monodramas in order to understand the process through which the private lives of women are made public and political. Specific areas of discussion include: oral discourse and language of the text; memory and the structure of the monodrama; gender representation and the female body on stage; stage space and public or private property; gender and speaker/spectator relationships. Feminist literary theory and post modern performance theory are strong influences on the thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, at an opening night party, I ran into the director of a local theatre school. It had been some time since he had seen me, and he was curious to know about my thesis. When I informed him that I was writing about Canadian one-woman plays, he looked at me quizzically, laughed, then asked me, "Did you draw the short stick or something?" His blatant lack of enthusiasm for the product of my one year's labour was distressing. I have grown accustomed to this kind of reaction from people who know little about theatre, particularly Canadian theatre, but such a comment from an "authority" so prominent in the theatre community was worrisome. Did my decision to write on short, intimate theatre pieces indicate that I had come out short in the academic lottery?

Ironically, I am writing about one of the most private forms of expression that exists within the most public of the arts. The monodrama is literally "playing" solitaire. It is by its very nature, private and intimate, yet it stands as theatre for public consumption. Women's "plays of solitaire" are perceived as "short sticks" because women have been told they must keep their personal lives secret. Their thoughts and experiences have been categorized unsuitable for public expression. The private female world is too "mundane" or too "political" for theatre professionals who bow to the opinions of board members and season ticket holders.[1]

Short stick or not, as a feminist, I am interested in women who write against this "authority" and who transform their personal lives into public, political expression. I am not interested in how many people see the monodramas, how good their reviews are, or how long their runs are. Somehow, somewhere, these plays "happened", and this intrigues me. I want to know how women playwrights are marking out their marginality against "authority". I want to know how the margins are made public and re-defined as a site for change.

My feminism is qualified by the Canadian theatre scene which marginalizes not only women's work but all new experimental work. In a country whose theatrical infrastructure is dependent upon subscription bases and government grants subject to audience attendance statistics, the narrative one-person play naturally loses out to the multi-charactered, action-centred full-length plays that are easily marketed to a consumerist audience well versed in the "big is better" aesthetic. Despite the notable increase in mainstage productions of Canadian plays,[2] works of traditional "realist" dramaturgy continue to be favoured over plays which challenge the norm. A brief examination of the professional mainstage seasons indicate that the Canadian playwright can only achieve a place in domestic historical, literary and dramatic canons through the reproduction of familiar and palatable forms. I by no means want to belittle the quality of Canadian work done to date; I merely want to illustrate how the Canadian woman playwright faces a double oppression. Her work is marginalized not only because of her sex but also because of her cultural context. I want to know how these margins are established as a place for re-defining, re-creating and re-naming.

I know (as my initial anecdote makes clear) the kind of "authority" vested in academe to determine art of worth and historical value. The subjects of academic inquiry are ultimately canonized and become a culture's "best sellers." As a feminist academic, I am compelled to write against the kind of "authority" that has the power to determine one work as "better" than another. I am aligning myself with feminist academics like Sue Ellen Case and Jill Dolan, who believe that it is the task of the critic to deconstruct traditional representation and to document present efforts to re-create and re-name women's images. By writing about these plays I am consciously drawing out the marginalized short stick and asserting its value against the "authorities" who believe that writing about Canadian women's plays is akin to losing the draw.

The privileging of certain kinds of theatre (i.e. British and American plays by men) on our main stages indicates a particular attitude toward the role of the arts in the fabrication and sustenance of culture. Essentially our society perceives art as a "mirror". It reflects the way we think, the way we speak, the way we act, and the things that we do and do not believe in. We value the art that we believe represents us the best, and we do not fund (thus we silence) the art which suggests the need for fundamental change to that self-conception. What we often fail to realize is that the "mirror" does not reflect everyone. The very concept of a "universal truth" or of "human" values is an impossibility and subject to ideological context. Linda Hutcheon in her influential book The Canadian Postmodern suggests that "what seems as 'natural' or given or common-sensical in a culture [constitutes] what [Roland Barthes] calls ideology, the unspoken system of belief specific to a particular place and time. What any society calls universal 'truth' is really... socially, culturally, economically, and historically particular." [3]

Recognizing the specificity of the reflection, women have been working to uncover a representation that exposes their own image. Women writing for theatre are turning the mirror toward themselves and in some cases doing away with Aristotle's looking glass altogether. A series of independent reading courses led me to discover the wealth of theatrical material that has seldom been produced and never been touched by scholars. Among these are a surprising number of one-woman plays. I owe credit to Jane Moss's article "Women's Theatre in Quebec," which outlined this reality and suggested that a deeper study be undertaken. My first observation was that even if the professional mainstream has never embraced "monodrama,"[4] the form has always found a niche in the fringes of the alternate theatre movement.

I discovered that women's monodrama, particularly in the comic form, has been around virtually as long as Canadians have been settled in communities and towns. The monologue was popular in small town amateur concerts - possibly because it was not too far removed from the equally popular dramatic recitation and because it allowed short, interesting glimpses into the lives of people without the burdens of extra cast and sophisticated texts. There were also a number of dramatic readers or elocutionists - predominantly female - who toured the provinces doing characterizations and one-woman readings of multi-character stories and scripts.[5] The development of the full-length, multi-charactered play can be seen as a response to these kinds of "unsophisticated" performances with their emphasis on personality rather than story or event. Those trying to make it in the early Canadian theatrical profession were probably discouraged from attempting the monodrama as a form precisely because it was too narrative and personal to be marketable theatre. Though the monologue as a form was reborn with radio drama, it was not until the 1970's that the monodrama became viable on stage outside of the amateur context.

The monodrama attracted the interest of women playwrights in Quebec from the very beginnings of women's theatre in that province. As Jane Moss outlines in her article "Women's Theatre in Quebec: Choruses, Monologues and Dialogues," "The first play considered a women's play by feminists is a one-woman piece - Marie Savard's Bien à moi, performed in 1970."[6] Antonine Maillet's Acadian text La Sagouine, also written in 1970, is perhaps the best known and certainly the most performed of all Canadian one-woman pieces in French or English. La nef des sorcières, a collection of eight monologues written by seven women, was performed at Montreal's establishment theatre, Théâtre du nouveau monde in 1976. This production is considered a major event in Quebecois cultural history , as women's theatre was seen breaking into the mainstream for the first time. It is significant that this feat was accomplished through monodrama. Bien à moi, La Sagouine, and La nef were the precursors of what is today a large canon of French plays for the solo female performer: e.g. Louisette Dussault's Moman (1979), Jovette Marchessault's Les vaches de nuit (1979), Sonia Côté's la 9e Sainte Folie (1979), Jeanne-Mance Delisle's Florence-Geneviève-Martha (1979), Francine Tougas's Histoire de fantômes (1980) and Grandir (1982), Jocelyne Goyette's Ma petite vache a mal aux pattes (1981), and Denise Guénette's Prête, pas prête, j'y vas (1982).

In the 70's and early 80's, the feminist community in Montreal was particularly strong and provided a environment conducive to the production of "women's work". The explosion of the women's monodrama coincides with the development of this cultural context which provides a partial explanation for the monodrama's success. Lucie Robert finds three common concerns in the women's theatre movement in Quebec which firmly rooted it in the feminist critical/intellectual movement of the time.[7] The principle issue was the representation and image of women as constructed by the traditional canon of dramatic literature. Robert argues that in the public Francophone theatre, the criteria for the typical heroine are youth and beauty. Thus the first attack levied against traditional theatrical art by feminist groups was the reappropriation of the stage and transformation of standard images into representations that took into consideration the realities lived by women. The monologue, as it developed in the early 1970's, gave these realities centre-stage attention. The second problem was one of an essentially masculine dramaturgy. Robert runs through the literary history of Quebec noting how women's writing reflects a general agreement with the style and characters developed by the male playwrights of the time. It was not until the early 70's that women began to opt for forms of theatrical expression, such as the collective and the monologue, that tended to bring forth their private realities.

> Les femmes ont, pour leur part, crée non pas tant des personnages que des rôles, non pas tant de pièces que des «shows» . Leur écriture est non linéaire, pleine de brèches syntaxiques; leurs textes sont souvent inachevés et, le plus souvant, fragmentés.

Robert's final point links the status of women within the theatrical community to their movement outside of it. Within traditional theatre, women were confined to the roles of actress, seamstress, stage-manager etc. The empowered roles of playwright, director, and artistic director had been the exclusive domain of men. This monopoly, combined with the profession's lack of sympathy to maternity leave and child care support, left women disempowered and in the margins. The solution was found in the reorganization of theatrical activity into collectives and cooperatives. This movement was part of the larger movement, spawned by Le jeune théâtre, which attempted to break down many of the hierarchies inherent in the theatre business, as well as to make theatre more accessible by taking the plays to the audiences instead of requiring that the audiences come to the theatre.

Although monologues are not usually a product of collective work (with the exception of La nef des sorcières), the establishment of a feminist community consciously engaged in the discovery of more "female" forms encouraged the emergence of the solo female voice. Connected with many French Canadian monodramas were such names as Luce Guilbeault (writer/performer/ director of La nef des sorcières), Louisette Dussault (performer /writer of La nef and Moman) and Pol Pelletier (performer/writer of La nef and performer of Les vaches de nuit). These women were among the founders and participants in such feminist collective and cooperative theatre groups as Le théâtre des cuisines, La commune à Marie and Le théâtre expérimental des femmes. These collectives, along with the appointment of women to the executives of various theatre companies and the appearance of feminist presses like Remue-Ménage and Editions de la pleine lune which were open to the publication of feminist theatrical work, provided a positive space for the production of women's monodramas.

Changes in the Quebec feminist movement since 1980 seem to have led to a decline in the writing and production of one-woman shows. Lorraine Camerlain in her article on

Quebec women's theatre for the Feminism and Canadian Theatre issue of Canadian Theatre Review (Summer 1985)[8] lists seven one-woman shows for the years 1979-1982 and none for the years 1983-85. In the same year, Camerlain wrote with Carole Fréchette in Jeu :

> Les temps changent. Il y a cinq ans à peine, la «question des femmes» était un sujet chaud dans tous les milieux. On comptait alors, dans le théâtre québéçois, une dizaine de groupes autonomes de femmes... dont le projet fondamental consistait à prendre la parole en dehors de toute intervention masculine. La parole de ces femmes allait de la description pure et simple à la dénonciation et à la revendication...de tout ce foisonnement, il ne reste aujourd'hui que le Théatre expérimental des femmes et les Folles alliées à se définir encore féministes.[9]

Camerlain attributes the disappearance of these troupes to a dilution of feminist values following their peak in 1980. At the time of the article, she was not sure if this represented a capitulation by feminist theatre practitioners or just a change of strategy. Writing in 1975, Pol Pelletier anticipated the latter by pointing out that though feminism had succeeded via the monodrama in the production of La nef des sorcières at TNM, women should look at moving even further ahead - beyond the monodrama - to the point where women can represent live and interesting relationships between women. She said: "Il est grand temps de dépasser le témoignage un peu braillard."[10] Playwrights like Marchessault and Pelletier have continued in this path, writing such texts as Marchessault's La saga des poules mouillées, Alice & Gertrude, Natalie & Renée et ce cher Ernest and Pelletier's La lumière blanche. These plays continue to make use of the monologue within the structure of a multi-charactered play that deals with relationships between women.

English Canadian women playwrights were more tentative with the monodrama as genre, tending to be partial to more traditional, full-length, multi-character plays. The monologue as a device, however, makes a startling number of appearances in Anglo-Canadian plays by women (e.g. Sharon Pollock's Blood Relations, Joanna Glass' Play

Memory, Beverley Simons' Crabdance and Sally Clark's Moo). The monologue also features in the Nightwood Theatre/ Anna Projects' This Is for You Anna. There were only a few English efforts in the area of the one-woman show in the seventies and early eighties. Beverley Simons wrote Preparing for a student production at Simon Fraser University in 1973 and Lezley Havard wrote Despair in 1976 for the Women Write for Theatre competition sponsored by Playwrights Canada. Linda Griffiths' celebrated Maggie and Pierre also appeared at this time. The explosion of English one-woman performance pieces has been more recent with Margaret Hollingsworth's Diving (1983), Joan MacLeod's Jewel (1985), Judith Thompson's Pink (1986), Wendy Lill's The Occupation of Heather Rose(1986), Pamela Boyd's Inside Out (1986), Janet Feindel's A Particular Class of Women (1987), Patricia Ludwick's Spinster (1988) and Sharon Pollock's Getting it Straight (1988). It should be noted that this is by no means an exhaustive list.

This late development can be partially attributed to the absence of the support community that produced the women's monodrama in Quebec. With the exception of Nightwood Theatre in Toronto (established in 1978) and recently Maenad Theatre in Calgary and Company of Sirens in Toronto, women's theatre in English Canada has been characterized by the lack of a feminist community of the kind found in Quebec. Kate Lushington, writing for CTR in 1985, remarked that Anglophone Canada was experiencing a "fear of feminism" in epic proportions.

> The feminist (can't you see the mock centerfold in National lampoon?) is a kind of superior egghead, complete with hammer (for hammering home her points) and a welding mask (non-traditional fashion to restrict her field of vision), sporting the latest in iron-clad ideologies. If she happens to be a playwright she writes on domestic issues such as needlepoint or abortion, portraying her female characters who talk about nurturing and relationships.[11]

Lushington refers to Rina Fraticelli's report "The Status of Women in the Canadian Theatre", which dreams of a Women's Inter Arts Building or Theatre Institute in which women could form a community which would teach skills and generate theory and criticism. Fraticelli suggests that women's work cannot happen without an institutional context - it is too easily marginalized and dismissed.

> In dismissing the substance of women's lives as insignificant, inappropriate, uninteresting and bland, the theory of gender discrimination finds its most efficient strategy. The invalidation of the playwright's personal experience sabotages and censors her far more efficiently than any public censorship - which at least comes after the act of creation - could hope to.[12]

Lushington's articulation of a feminist-phobia partially explains the veering away from the one-woman play in English Canada when it was most popular in Quebec.[13] It is this "insignificant substance" of women's lives that makes up the text of the monodrama. Without the support of the feminist collectives, the voice of a woman alone is drowned. Only recently, with the sprouting of numerous "fringe" theatre festivals, has the monodrama found its "sanctioned" niche in English Canada. Quick surveys of the recent Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver and Toronto Fringe programs indicate an large number of one-woman plays in production. Furthermore, every year new festivals such as Edmonton's One-(Wo)man Play Festival, Vancouver's Women in View Festival and Nightwood's Groundswell Festival of New Women's Plays, as well as a whole body of new works and one act festivals, encourage the development of new texts. These events have provided, in the last seven or eight years, both the financial and artistic opportunity for the performance of the one-woman play in English Canada.

Very little critical work has been done on the Canadian woman's monodrama. Canadian studies on the solo voice include Louise Forsyth's essay "First Person Singular: Monologues by Women in Several Modern Quebec plays," and the Alonzo LeBlanc study

"Femmes en solo," both published in 1983. These articles are important documentary studies but are limited in scope. Forsyth restricts herself to a few French Canadian texts, and LeBlanc's work lists monodramas in French but does not engage in critical analysis. Other than a cursory look provided by Renate Usmiani at the annual meeting of the Association for Canadian Theatre History,[14] there have been no studies of the genre of the monodrama as it has been used by English Canadian women playwrights.

Both John Gentile's Cast of One: One Person Shows from the Chautauqua to the Broadway Stage and Jordon Young's Acting Solo: the Art of the One-Man Show entertain some theoretical philosophising on the semiotics of the monologue as a form. However, these recent American studies lack concrete dramaturgical analysis. Furthermore, they do not venture to comment on the particular affinity women have for the genre, although both document copious performances of monodrama by women. Young, who excludes the feminine voice from his title, is particularly guilty of this charge.

Clearly there is a lot more to be done than can be accomplished in a Master's thesis. For brevity's sake, my work will focus on the monodramatic process of re-creating the private female self in public. I will generally leave questions of Canadiana to the side. However, in a postmodern, post-Meech Lake Canada, so perplexed over the nature of Canadian identity, irresistible connections between the re-construction of both female and national identities do come into play. In this respect I am influenced by both Robert Wallace's Producing Marginality and Linda Hutcheon's text referred to earlier.

I have further limited my scope through the discriminating practice of studying only published work. Unfortunately, this decision results in the further marginalization of already marginalized writing. Without a doubt there have been hundreds of plays, performed only once, never reviewed and never published that remain in manuscript form in theatre archives and personal collections. I have a personal (and unprovable) theory that all women playwrights have a one-woman show somewhere in the bottom of a filing cabinet. Regretfully, the recuperation of this material must be left aside for future study and editorial work.

The texts that I have chosen similarly represent only a small portion of published work. I have tried to select pieces representing the broadest range of styles and perspectives. As a feminist with a background in literature, I have felt partial to the pieces which were the most readable and expressive of feelings or concerns that I share. Keeping this in mind, I have attempted to give fair play to those pieces which would likely perform better than they read and that deal with subjects toward which I feel less of a personal affinity. I have also tried to choose pieces that represent the various stages in the development of the woman's monodrama in English and French Canada over the last twenty years.

My approach to the monodrama is deeply indebted to other "authorities" upon whose writing I have based my methodology. I have relied heavily upon Keir Elam (The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama) and Austin Quigley (The Modern Stage and Other Worlds) for their postmodern deconstructions of theatrical communication. A useful structuralist vocabulary that has facilitated the description of many nebulous ideas comes from Manfred Pfister's dramaturgical handbook, The Theory and Analysis of Drama .

Finally, it must be noted that the popularity of the one-person show in Quebec in the seventies and early eighties was not limited to women. One need only look at the popularity of Yvon Deschamps, Reynald Bouchard and the monologues of Michel Tremblay to realize the appeal the form held for both genders. Similarly, in English Canada, the same events which are characterized by a great number of one-woman shows host a similar number of one-man shows. I do not doubt that many of the conclusions that

I will draw from the body of texts I am going to examine will apply to Canadian one-man shows as well as to one-person shows in general. These other issues, however, lie beyond the scope of my thesis. Again, I am restricting my study to the dramaturgical and stylistic elements of the one-woman play, in order to conclude not what makes "playing solitaire" particularly feminine, but what makes it so apt to the feminine/feminist project of rendering the private public and the personal, political.

NOTES

[1] Case in point: the Citadel Theatre's 1991-1992 season (Shoctor, McLab and Rice theatres) which does not include one play by a woman.

[2] The Citadel's upcoming season includes eight Canadian plays.

[3] Linda Hutcheon, The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 12.

[4] The term "monodrama " is borrowed from Manfred Pfister's text The Theory and Analysis of Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Pfister offers this term as an alternative to "monologue" which is inappropriate to my study because, as an antonym to "dialogue", it excludes the possibility of internal dialogue within the speaker or dialogue with the audience or a second character that is not present. A monodrama is an extended "soliloquy" or synonym for one-person play.

[5] Moira Day, informal conversation.

[6] Jane Moss, "Women's Theatre in Quebec: Choruses, Monologues and Dialogues," Quebec Studies 1 (Spring 1983): 279.

[7] Lucie Robert, "Réflections sur trois lieux communs conçernant les femmes et le théâtre," Revue d'histoire littéraire du Québec et du Canada français 5 (Winter/Spring 1983):75-88.

[8] Lorraine Camerlain, "En multiples scènes," Canadian Theatre Review 43 (Summer 1985):73-90.

[9] Lorraine Camerlain and Carole Frechette, "Le théâtre expérimental de femmes: essai en trois mouvements," Jeu: cahiers du théâtre 36 (1985):59-66.

[10] Pol Pelletier, "Petite histoire...," Possibles 4.1(Automne 1979):175-87.

[11] Kate Lushington, "Fear of Feminism," Canadian Theatre Review 43 (Summer 1985): 5-11.

[12] Rina Fraticelli, " The Status of Women in the Canadian Theatre," (1982), report prepared for the Canada Council, unpublished, quoted by Lushington, 11.

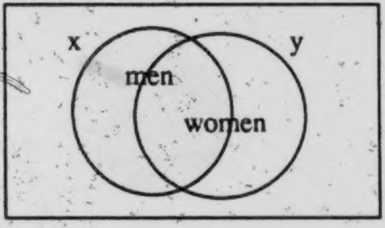
[13] It should also be noted that women in English Canada exist in an entirely different socio-cultural context. The feminist movement in Quebec was much stronger than similar movements in English Canada simply because Quebecoise women had much further to go to liberate themselves from the sexism of French Canadian Catholic culture. Perhaps it is not so much a case of fearing feminism but a case of women in English Canada not perceiving themselves to be victims of patriarchy in the same way that women in French Canada did. Under such conditions there would be less of a need to explore particular "women's" issues, and more "universal", "human" issues would be favoured.

[14] Renate Usmiani, "A Dramaturgy of the Monologue?" paper presented at the Association for Canadian Theatre History Annual Conference, May 27,1990.

CHAPTER ONE
Première Personne du Féminin Singulier:
Language in the Monodrama

The deconstruction of one-woman shows in search of their distinct linguistic, semantic and literary properties is a presumptuous task that depends upon two assumptions: that there are distinct qualities to women's writing and that these distinct qualities are manifested in women's monodrama. Quebecoise writer and critic Louise Dupré has asked, "Is there such a thing as an essentially feminine writing?"[1] Elaine Showalter, in her influential essay "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" asks, "How can we constitute women as a distinct literary group? What is the difference in women's writing?" [2] For decades now feminist linguists (searching for a genderlect); feminist psychologists (looking to root women's relationship to language in the development of the psyche); and cultural feminists (who perceive a connection between women's biology and the production of words and speech) have been working on this problematic question.[3] Each of these approaches has facilitated an understanding of the deep and complex systems of oppression that have disadvantaged women's literary production. Furthermore each has had a great deal of success in outlining many of the similarities amongst women's texts. However, as Showalter is quick to point out, these strategies inevitably fail to account for the differences that exist between women's texts, primarily on the level of content and subject matter. While they begin to answer "how women use language," they fail to question "what women say through language."[4] Even a cursory glance at the collection of monodramas that I have selected for study reveals that the language of each text is quite unique because each is concerned with different ideas and arises out of a different context. The woman who writes between her children's naps will write a very different text than the woman who participates in a feminist writers' circle in Montreal. The above linguistic, psychological and essentialist strategies generally set aside the contexts and contents of women's texts which must be examined before language can be looked at in any detail.

Julia Kristeva's theory of language recommends the study of specific linguistic situations. Her work leads toward a study of language as specific discourse rather than universal "langue." Kristeva strives to deconstruct the traditional barriers that exist between linguistics and life, in order to construct a new kind of field - semiotics or textual theory.[5] Under such premises, all meaning is contextual and it becomes vital to study the content of every utterance. Thinking along the same lines as Kristeva, Showalter outlines a cultural theory of women's literary production that combines all of the above methodologies with Kristevian contextual analysis. Showalter assumes that women's writing is produced in a specific sociological, historical and cultural context. Therefore in all creative efforts, space and environment, along with access to language, psyche and biology, become mitigating factors. Showalter draws upon the diagrams of sociologists Shirley and Edwin Ardener who represent society through the use of two interlocking circles.[6]



(Figure 1)

The first circle (x) encompasses the dominant masculine culture - the male experience. The second sphere (y) depicts female space and encompasses an area outside the dominant circle - literally a "no-man's" land. This circle, labelled "the wilderness", represents the aspects of female life that lie outside the male experience. There is no corresponding area in the male sphere to this wilderness, as all dominant culture is inscribed in history and accessible through languages derived to explain it. Woman-centred art and text thus aims to explore this vast space of female wilderness and to make that which has been silent, speak.

To Christyl Verduyn, writing is one of many possible ways to explore the female wilderness. By replacing the written "she" with the first person singular "I", the woman writer accedes to the rank of subject. She leaves behind the status of object suggested by the third person singular and inscribed in historical and literary canons.[7] Verduyn explains that because their experience has always been publicly documented by members of the dominant sex (if documented at all), women have always turned to personal forms of writing such as the journal, the memoir, the autobiography and the letter in order to reinscribe the subjective "I". These private "games of solitaire " provide an opportunity for the woman to document her everyday experience. The one-woman play is a similar endeavour, arising out of the impulse to chart and document the female wilderness.

Context: Authority and Subjectivity

There is an evident link between the lives of the playwrights of the Canadian women's monodrama and the stories that their speakers tell. With the exception of Judith Thompson's and Beverley Simons' plays, content is primarily autobiographical.[8]

Louisette Dussault recalls the private feelings and experiences that drove her to write:

> [J]e voulais parler des rapports émotifs que je vivais avec mes enfants, ma mère, mon chum, de la grossesse, de la sexualité, de la compétition. C'étaient tous des thèmes qui, à ce moment-là de ma vie, correspondaient à mon cheminement intérieur et m'impliquaient profondément.[9]

Dussault found time to write Moman either while her children napped or between three and five in the morning. She explains that these circumstances produced a text that was more linked to her subconscious than to anything objective.

> Le fait d'écrire dans un état de demi-sommeil et directement à la machine laissait parler mon subconscient: tous les personnages de l'autobus qui se mettaient à vivre laissaient parler des parties de moi; c'étaient des pressions intérieures, des désirs, des coins d'ombre en moi....[10]

Going so far as to name Moman "Louisette", Dussault has made no attempt to hide the autobiographical tendencies of her text.

Formerly a professional actress, Pamela Boyd found motherhood completely isolated her from the theatre community. "I didn't have the kind of time and energy one needs to invest to get a career moving. For the first one and a half to two years I was tending to my son exclusively." She says, "All your creative energy builds up when you're at home with a child. You feel isolated and powerless and it all comes out in an explosion."[11] For Boyd, the explosion was Inside Out, an attempt to reconcile the need for personal creative space with the important experiences of motherhood. Both Dussault's and Boyd's texts are "autodramas" about the women who write them. Narcissism is indulged as the writer herself emerges as the subject of a text that relays personal experience.

Janet Feindel describes A Particular Class of Women as a "labour of love, with all the joy and frustration it entails."[12] The play grew out of Feindel's work in the sex trade industry and her characters are based upon women she knew personally on the strip.[13] Similarly, Wendy Lill says of her own writing, "I think it is more interesting to explore what you see around you than to fabricate things in your mind."[14] The Occupation of Heather Rose draws from Lill's personal experiences as a health care worker for the Canadian Mental Health Association in Northwestern Ontario and from her work on a native newspaper. These jobs brought her to northern Native reserves where she found herself sleeping on a lot of nursing station floors. She recorded her experiences in a journal which later grew into her play text.[15]

Joan MacLeod recalls the influences that led her toward a more autobiographical writing style:

> I don't think I understood before that writing could be about events in my own life. Reading [Alice] Monroe and [Margaret] Lawrence taught me to use the personal, or start with the personal and then make it bigger, more accessible.[16]

In an interview with MacLeod, Judith Rudakoff noted that Marjorie seemed to be drawn from MacLeod's own experience. MacLeod replied that Jewel grew out of living in the North when she was in her early twenties. She worked in a pipeline camp, but more importantly she said: "I knew what it was like to have a boyfriend who worked on the rigs".[17] For Feindel, Lill and MacLeod, the monologue is a private form like the journal or memoir. The first person singular is embraced with confidence, declaring that what "I" (as opposed to "she" or "her") have to say is important.

Margaret Hollingsworth says she finds it easier to be autobiographical in her fiction than in her drama: "In plays I'm always trying to keep a distance, to be objective. The characters in my plays often have very little to do with me."[18] However, Hollingsworth was born in Sheffield, England in 1939 and emigrated to Canada in 1968. It seems probable that the fascination with space and national identity worked out in her plays has developed through personal experience. She has said in an interview, "The first thing that struck me when I came to Canada [was] people asking what is a Canadian - who are we? That dribbling question over and over again...." [19]

Jovette Marchessault invested Les vaches de nuit with much from the female relationships that she has personally experienced. The mother-daughter bond developed in the text can be seen as a reflection of Marchessault's relationship with her own mother and grandmother. She considers this period to have been an apprenticeship in which she grew to understand the world sensually while gaining a consciousness of the power of words, language and story telling.[20] Marchessault's writing of Les vaches is a natural progression out of the oral tradition that informed her childhood.

Each of the participants in the La nef des sorcières writing collective independently chose the monologue as their particular form of expression. Luce Guilbeault, director of the project, speculated that there was a need for each writer to be autonomous before she could speak as a part of a group. Pol Pelletier, who was to play the role of Marie-Claire Blais' "Marcelle," was unhappy with the lesbian character as Blais defined her. Pelletier found her too traditionally romantic, and not adhering to Pelletier's own experiences as a lesbian. In the end Pelletier played Blais' "Marcelle" but also wrote her own "Marcelle II" as a complementary perspective. Louisette Dussault ("La Fille") remarked on how important it was that each participant reconcile her own self to the character she was to write or play. She tells a story about how, having just given birth to twins, she was self-conscious of her body. At one rehearsal she was in the middle of these lines, "Pour jouir, il faudrait que j'ai les fesses ni trop haute ni trop basses, la taille grossse comme ça, pis les siens, j'en parle même pas, t'en auras jamais assez d'abord qui tombe pas...," when she stopped suddenly.

> [J]e m'arrête brusquement, incapable de continuer, j'ouvre ma robe de chambre sous laquelle j'étais nue, je me regarde, j'éclate en sanglots et je dis: "Calvaire de Chriss...toi non plus Dussault, tu te prends pas comme t'es!" Toutes les femmes présentes se sont mises à pleurer, ce geste-là les ramenait d'une façon émotive à leur propre difficulté d'accepter leurs corps...."[21]

Each of the La nef monodramas is unique. No two stories are the same because each woman writes from a different perspective, from a different experience and from a different cultural space. However, what connects all of these plays is the intimacy that each assumes in the exploration of the self that is writing. Nicole Brossard's "Ecrivain" expresses the importance of locating, and sharing these differences and experiences:

> Je n'ai jamais aimé parler de moi. Comme si j'avais toujours eu l'impression qu'il n'y avait rien de spécial à raconter sur ma vie privée. Et pourtant c'est celle-là qui compte. Comment on naît, comment on joue, comment on jouit, comment on souffre, comment on meurt. (77)

In all of these plays, the distinction between author and subject is diminished or erased altogether and traditional implications of "authority" and "authorship" fall away. As one never considers the writer of a diary to be its "author", so the distinction applies to the monodrama. No longer is there a supreme being (known as authorial intent) that stands outside of the text and is able to ascribe to it definitive meaning. Author and subject are connected and are involved in the continuous process of self-exploration and identity discovery.

Language: Authority and Orality

"How women use language" is a more difficult issue, for as Féral says, "There is no uniformity in female discourse." [22] The indisputable fact is that all women arrange words differently on the page. In her essay "Mapmaking: A Survey of Feminist Criticism,"[23] Barbara Godard theorizes that because women are generally excluded from the literary scene, "if they are to enter it, they must make their difference a subject."[24] Her analysis, founded in the Derridian definition of "difference" as deferral, outlines a subject, no longer represented as repressed object, but instead displaced from the margins of representation to the centre of the page. Godard locates difference in the oral quality of women's writing. She suggests that women's writing is spontaneous and personal, like talk. It spews forth from the private experience "which has so long been the scene of women's creative endeavours."[25] Women's language denies the rigid, formal qualities of language that are the marks of "authorship." The struggle to create a text with a definitive meaning is replaced with the discursive process of unravelling the self. The emphasis in women's texts tends to fall on the telling and not the story, hence its alignment with speech, gossip and idiolect.[26]

> Les paroles [de femmes] sont marquées en tant qu'elles son repérées, nommées, discréditées: le commérage, le verbiage, les confidences. Dans la cuisine et dans l'intimité elles y ont droit à ces paroles qui tournent sur elles-mêmes, figées autour des réalités qui ne parviennent pas à s'abstraire, se structurer et se hiérarchiser. [27]

Not all women, however, write in Godard's "womanspeak". Alternatively, many deconstruct the "authoritative script" that women have traditionally learned in their role as the subservient partner in discourse. The most notable example of this is Margaret Hollingsworth's Diving[28], in which Viveca's story is interrupted almost as soon as it begins with the voice of her mother.

> My mother says that swimming makes you bulge in all the wrong places. She wants me to be a dog trainer. She says there is a future in breeding. (116)

The speaker's relationship to language is instantly established. Though Viveca stands alone on the stage, the command over speech is not hers. She does not compose her own text. Her words and thoughts are censored and virtually silenced by the constantly intruding voices of figures of "authority" that insist she tell their particular story. Her discourse drowns in the echos of the male voice that repeats, "Dive Viveca!"(116); the commands of her mother who orders, "Retrieve!"(116); the rulings of the apartment manager who stipulates, "Sorry no pets"(116); and the philosophizing of Mrs. Martin who ironically asserts that "born lucky" people don't need to be told anything (117). Viveca can only reiterate what is expected of her by those who prey on her. The monologue is a text composed by "authorities" who achieve Viveca's surrender by the time she dives for the second time. When Viveca returns to the stage, the note of command has gone from the voice on the tape. It is no longer necessary. She appears more confident. Her awkwardness has been replaced with a lobotomized acceptance of the words spoken to and for her. She is effectively silenced.

Fragments of Viveca's voice do surface from beneath the authoritative text, however.

> I moved out of her house and rented an upstairs apartment.... It was a lovely apartment. Just one room, but on the 15th floor - and a balcony. and there was a supermarket down below, and a car park and all these small cars like cockroaches coming and going, but what I could see most was the sky. I used to stand on the balcony. (116)

These words join the first lines of the text and allow Viveca's personal, private story to emerge. There is an incompatibility between what seeps out almost accidentally and what Viveca repeats in invisible quotation marks. Her hesitations become signposts and indicate an inherent discomfort or insecurity with the discourse of "authority". The attentive listener is able to discern gaps in her speech where the subconscious emerges, and repressed and forbidden desires come forth: she has been watching eagles, and she envies their freedom (115). There are pauses in her text, points where she stops speaking and cautiously looks about "to see if anyone will notice"(116). A sentence ends in an ellipsis as she temporarily forgets the rule about standing on balconies and for a moment towers over all (116). Viveca cries: "Dive dog" (117), in an attempt to repossess the command of a language usually forbidden. She cries: "Obey!", always remembering that Eagles "never have to learn". What Hollingsworth's text makes clear is that Viveca has not quite learned the master discourse by heart. She hesitates, fumbles and procrastinates thereby allowing the listener to hear the spontaneous orality lying beneath the words of the "authorities."

A similar relation is established between women and language in Preparing[29]. In Beverley Simons' text, language becomes, like the make-up, the wigs and the clothes, a way to present Jeannie to the public. Language is a costume used for playing the roles of daughter, wife, mother and career woman. Language is a prop equated with rhetoric as it functions to gain power in the home, business and artistic community. Language is a weapon used to construct a powerful, invincible persona: "If you want to be a fat cat, grow claws" 35.

Yet as in Diving, the woman beneath the script cannot help but surface through unconscious hesitation. Again points of suspension are used to allow just enough space to convince the listener that this woman is not content in her discourse of preparation.

> Just once, I wish I could step outside of time where just once I could prepare myself, without being rushed, for ... nothing, or...maybe something...important...when I find out what that is. (27)

As the stage directions indicate, Jeannie's face may remain hidden but her voice is exposed, like a person who has "not had the time to apply the social layers" (32). Jeannie has not learned her lines verbatim; she struggles with the words, which by their very nature seek to undermine her sense of self.

Amidst the noise of the memorised monologue of patriarchy there is one voice whose "murmur", in the words of Nicole Brossard, "is unceasing." The voice belongs to the woman who speaks. "It is a rhythm, and energy, a project, that speaks...the private landscape," where these characters recognize themselves and learn to decode who they are.[30] Part of the process of trying to uncover "womanspeak" in the monodrama is to emphasize the hesitations, the mistakes and the silences. "What is left unsaid, what has been unwittingly plotted and comes out as grammatical mistakes, stylistic errors and awkwardness of expression" must be scrutinized[31] so as to, in Marguerite Duras' and Xavière Gauthier's terms, "let the flaws, the gaps and the blank spaces leave their unconscious effects on the lives and actions of the characters."[32]

Both Judith Thompson's Pink[33] and Wendy Lill's The Occupation of Heather Rose[34] are characterized by an awareness of the non-neutrality of language and consciously juxtapose the discourse of non-mastery with an authoritative master discourse. Lucy's speech in Pink illustrates how the language of the dominant culture operates as a silencer upon the more spontaneous forms of discourse that seep through the gaps in Hollingsworth's and Simons' texts. Thompson's play begins with a very fluid use of syntax. The child's wails are combined with the oral flow of words guided only by emotion and not grammar.

> NELLIE, NELLIE, NELLIE, NELLIE, NELLIE, NELLIE, NELLIE, I want you to come back, to shampoo my hair and make a pink cake and we can sit in the back and roll meallie pap in our hands.... (75)

Bold face letters, incomplete sentences, incongruous thoughts and copious repetition all indicate that this child is not yet master of "White". Instead she speaks "Pink" or kiddyspeak, a mediating oral language that is compatible with "Black," which is also passionate, rhythmic and spontaneous. With age Lucy inherits the less spontaneous, non-oral "authoritative" language of her parents, which imposes different meanings on words like "white" and "black". "White" is the master discourse that determines meaning and power. "White" means good, "Black" means bad. Without ever knowing it, Lucy learns the tongue of apartheid.

> I told you not to go in those marches and I told you, I told you that what you guys don't understand, what you don't see, is apartheid's for YOU. IT'S FOR YOU GUYS' FEELINGS. (75)

Lucy's speech takes on the structural characteristics of mastered English. She begins to speak in full sentences leaving behind the passionate child-like ramble.

> Even though I'm ten years old I made you die. I made you go in that march and I made you die. I know that forever. (77)

Her vocal "authority" stands in contrast to Nellie's silence both in life and in death.

Heather Rose, possessing an awareness that neither Viveca, Jeannie or Lucy share, suffers from the inefficacy of language to express her experience. Heather realizes that language as a tool for ordering the world, often orders it according to specific ideological agendas which contradict individual experience. She says: "Saying someone has a different culture is just a polite way of saying they're weird" (78). Experience has taught Heather that much of the language used to describe the North is the patronising speech of the "civilized" which is removed from the realities of the people who live there. Heather is able to deconstruct the language of "White" people by pointing out the hierarchical ideology that lies behind such words as "Indian", "Whites", "Culture" and "Alcohol". Lill presents these words in her text in bold-faced, uppercase letters, indicating in the stage directions that Heather is to write them on a blackboard (71,74,76,84). This act physically isolates language as a prime codifier of experience: mere letters arranged to suit the needs of a particular ideology. Heather learns that each word is laced with value judgments made by those with the "authority" and power to determine meaning. As in Pink, "White" means good, and powerful. Heather says that one night she wrote the word "Indian" four hundred times on her dining room table cloth in an attempt to uncover what it meant (71).

Heather is unable to master the language which is supposed to simplify and organize an upside-down crazy world into neat categories of do-gooders and victims. She cannot become an "authority" on the North. Her personal writing in journal entries reflects an ambiguous and painful experience with no tidy solutions. Sometimes days of frustration and alcoholic bingeing are reported by both Heather and Nurse Bunny as a series of "closed earlies." At times, words fail entirely to capture the experience and journal pages subside into cartoons, drawings and cigarette burns (70). Heather cannot make the culture "mean". She cannot order it according to government rules and regulations. She is partial to one of Bunny's journal entries precisely because of its fluidity and its blatant lack of "authority".

> Jobit Loon died of a shaking fit. Out on his trapline with a beaver in his mitt. And no toque on. The day was dark when they brought him in, his skin grey, his wife watching. Her eyes a long way away. (69)

Formal language deteriorates rapidly in Heather's present tense monologue. Her sentences become more fragmented, her stream of thought less coherent. Her speech is reminiscent of Bunny's writing. Heather is no longer "master" of her discourse. The voices of Ramsay, Camilla Loon, Miss Jackson and even silent Mary begin to occupy her head. Act Two is a progression into the discourse of madness and spontaneous, discontinuous, oral speech.

> Hold on Heather. And the wind still howling and ripping around outside the nursing station. And Annadora's laughter still inside my head. Hold on Heather. And the big cheese poster still on the wall and the t-bone steak, the wet lettuce... and a dozen messages from Miss Jackson like little pink petals all over the desk. (92)

By the end, Heather's language has neither the glossy propagandist tone of the governmental literature on Native programs and food groups, nor the idyllic romanticism of her orientation session. Equally foreign to her is the abrasiveness of Ramsay and the silence of the Natives who never speak to her.

> You don't come right out and SAY things. You never let things really pour out like we do! We whites! You don't do that, do you? It's all indirect with you. (88)

Heather Rose wants to come out and SAY how she feels but she cannot do so in an ordered, organized speech. Her experience has been one of displacement. Her native language has been pulled apart and scrutinized for the ideology that is its foundation. She can no longer speak that discourse of order and organization. Instead she turns to emotion, to passion and to ambiguity.

In Inside Out[35] the speaker is tentative in her use of language because she feels her vocabulary is weak and her experience unworthy of the telling. Ellen feels that because the words she speaks describe her domestic experience and are not intellectual or philosophical, they are not valid.

> I look like a more mature, tired person, who might be interesting...then I open my mouth... and nothing comes out.... I look like a boring person who never reads the paper.... Maybe I should get a hair cut. (124)

Ellen claims she has forgotten how to read (133); authoritative, written language exists outside of her experience. She is equally unsure of her ability to speak intelligibly:

> I'm probably talking too much. It's an occupational hazard, you know, home all day long with the baby, then you get out with intelligent adults and run off at the mouth like somebody's mother. (133)

Ellen sees her command over language as more connected to baby talk or to the simplistic rhythmic/rhymed quality of children's verse, which she uses at times to order her experience.

> There was an old woman who thought she was bright.
> But her brain was a traitor and took off in flight.
> She opened her mind, took everything in
> but it all came out in a garbled din.... (133)

Ellen is unable to author "a fine tale" (130), as Simons' Jeannie can, and the fact that it is expected of her angers her. Frustrated with her inability to communicate (and her lack of a companion to communicate to), Ellen eventually explodes into a hysterical soliloquy. Like Heather Rose, she carries on at a fever pace, completely abandoning herself to words. Freed from the constraints of "sane" discourse, Ellen explores what had been silenced in her:

> I *try* to keep myself up, show off my attributes, write the odd screenplay. I've written one recently, against all odds, great odds. It's about *hope* and *faith* . Bringing up children in this day and age should be enough, you say. Should be fulfilment. Should be fulfilment. Perhaps I'm a freak. Perhaps we're all freaks. We're all freaks. We're all freaks. We're all freaks. Bringing babies to

> life doomed to imminent death. Imminent death. It's animal nature. We're all animals. We're animals. We're animals. Just animals. When faced with extinction propagate in a frenzy. A frenzy. A frenzy. A frenzy. When faced with starvation eat its young. Eat its young. Eat its young. (134)

Temporarily abandoning the discourse of mother and wife, Ellen begins to uncover her emotions. In an oral, irrational stream of consciousness, she pours out her anger, her pride and her fear. She says all she never could say to her husband and to the director she hoped would look at her play.

Ellen, like Heather Rose, does not see her outbursts, her lack of control, as positive energy. In both cases women assume that they lack the "authority" to get their "ducks in a row" (Heather Rose, 91). Each woman sees her falling away from rational discourse as a turning toward madness. Neither Ellen nor Heather see their language as the "womanspeak" of feminist theory as does Louisette Dussault's "Moman."[36] Dussault has constructed fifteen voices, which constantly interfere (as similar voices do with Viveca) with Moman's discourse. Dussault describes these as a manifestation of all "authorities" that try to predetermine what "mothers" say and do. They are the pressures of society that define and determine mothering.[37] Moman's entrenchment in this discourse is reflected by her persistent referral to herself as "Moman". Her own name is lost in favour of the generic title that describes her role.

Moman, like Ellen, gets caught up in child talk, but for Moman, the texts of simple songs are not symptomatic of impending madness but are an alternative means of self expression. "Kiddyspeak" becomes a way to describe her own experience outside of society's interpretations.

> Sur la glace de vos désirs
> J'ai appris à patiner
> Surpassant vos attentes
> Pour m'assurer la récompense. (81)

Moman, also like Ellen, arrives at a crisis point and is no longer able to be just Moman. She wants to search out the "moi". However, her subsequent anger-induced hysteria is perceived as a rebirth and not a degeneration of sanity.

> C'est pas surprenant que je sois tannée de jouer à la mère! Je joue à la mère depuis que je suis au monde.... J'ai été la mère de mon père, de mon frère, de mes soeurs, de mes chums, de mes hommes..., Qui je suis MOI! MOI! (114)

At the end of this outburst Moman can exclaim: "Je suis plus capable de jouer à la mère-police!" (138) This statement becomes a declaration of the "je", no longer dictated by a century-old text on motherhood, but spoken in her own words from her own heart. The play becomes a documentation of the process by which Moman encounters and appropriates language.

A similar progression from an imposed and restraining master discourse to a more spontaneous and hence ambiguous discourse is noted in the monologues of Jeanne-Mance Delisle[38]. In "Florence," a contrast is built up between the Québécoise speaker and the words of an Italian man read from a letter. The first moments of the piece are dominated by this second voice, which is characterized by an extreme degree of poetic formality. The writer of the letter (obviously writing through the intermediary of some sort of singles' club or chain letter organization), introduces and presents himself in flattering, romantic colours.

> Je ne sais pas pourquoi je vous raconte tout cela, cara Florence. Vous êtes si loin et je ne vous connais pas encore. Mais ce soir, ce soir, j'ai la plainte du loup et je vous choisis, cara mia, pour écouter ce coeur en écharpe qui, forte heureusement pour moi, retrouve parfois son enthousiasme et son mordant et apprécie la vie comme une compagne gaie et tolérable. (151)

Florence clearly does not speak this way, as her commentary, interspersed between the letter passages, indicates: "On dirait que chu tu-seule dans l'Québec! "(149) She is, however, impressed with his writing, stipulating: "Y'a pas un Québécois qui m'aurait écrit comme ça!" (152). When she tries to write a return letter, she adopts a formal style, closer to his text than her speech.

> Votre lettre si douloureuse, si pleine de charme et de poésie, fait que j'ai un peu honte de mon vocabulaire. (152)

Even as she strives for formality in grammar and vocabulary, she apologizes (like Ellen), feeling that her command over language is inadequate. Words do not come easily to her and she gives up writing after only a brief attempt. Having put down her pen, she still speaks "un peu comme un automate" (153). It is only when she seeps into the comfort of memory and the past tense that she begins to speak with an oral ease.

The language of Geneviève's husband is the language of his work, a language he does not share with Geneviève and that she believes she cannot understand. He is "ben propre, ben poli d'paroles" (160). Her language is spontaneous, personal and more like Florence's: "Moé au moins, j'ai le temps d'rêver..." (160). Between Geneviève and Raymond, conversation is pre-planned and stilted. (He calls her from work and asks her to prepare their dinner talk, 161). When the two of them are together she conforms to his rules and, like Florence, is "comme un automate." Geneviève escapes the silencing presence of her husband through imagination. Once relieved of his presence she tells of her dreams with a spontaneous intensity that brings forth the rich sensuality of her being.

> D'autres fois, c'est des garçons pis des filles tout nus que j'vois. Des mains qui s'caressent, des seins qui s'frôlent, des ventres qui s'touchent. Tout l'monde est mêlé ensemble! (163)

The final monologue, "Martha", pushes even further as the speaker enters into a conscious attack of the kind of "authority" society exerts over women like Florence and Geneviève. Martha makes it clear that she knows women are not supposed to participate in discourse ("A ma maison c'était mon père qui parlait," 169). Men order and control language. But Martha has no intention of observing such linguistic hierarchies and proceeds to speak in a hard and abrasive tone that comes out of anger she cannot control. She repossesses language by breaking it down for the ideology behind it. She makes it express the anger that she feels.

> Une fois, une fois j'ai noyé des p'tits poulets dans le renvoi d'eau.... (169)
>
> Une autre fois, j'ai enfermé mon p'tit frère dans l'clos avec un gros coq malin.... (170)

This mad hostility and vulgarity is contrasted with the restrained proper speech of "good wives."

> **Première fois que j'emploie cette lotion... C'est la première fois que j'mets ma p'tite jaquette de nylon bleu, ça doit faire un effet sur le drap jaune pis bleu! ...Ché qu'mes cheveux blonds sur l'oreiller bleu, ça l'air pur pis doux comme la sainte vierge... Les hommes aiment ça, les vierges!** (173-174)

Delisle writes this text in bold faced letters, highlighting them as Lill highlights words that have clear ideological implications. Implied here is a criticism of the speech that Florence, Geneviève, Viveca, Jeannie and Lucy have felt obliged to participate in. Martha sets up and denounces the pretty words used to entice and seduce a man and wonders, "Y a-tu quet'chose de vraie dans l'monde?" (175) Implicit is the idea that women have been doing "le ménage" of their language and their lives in order to conform to the images "authorities" construct for them. Martha cries out in desperation, "J'veux r'trouver l'homme, le vrai, la femme, la vraie! " Both Moman and Florence-Geneviève-Martha search out and covet language that is natural and spontaneous to women. As texts, they work against the dictated discourses the speakers of Diving and Preparing have to learn. Moreover, these pieces seek to undermine the insecurities that threaten to silence Ellen and Heather Rose. These texts call for a recuperation of all that has been lost through hesitation or apology.

A word of caution is necessary at this point. Now that a woman's discourse has been identified as working against the discourse of a privileged "authority" and alternatively aligned with the more fragmented, fractured qualities of oral speech, the feminist scholar must be careful not to confuse the language that Martha calls for with a situation in which women merely speak like men by acquiring, as Lucy does, the authoritative discourse of the dominant culture. Janet Feindel's A Particular Class of Women[39] is based upon what Feindel believes to be the ability of sex trade workers to articulate sexual issues, a subject that traditionally excludes women's opinions.

> Like the fool in *King Lear* who is in the rare position of commenting on the havoc in the court and the madness that results from it, the stripper is able to understand and comment on sexual hypocrisy by becoming a clown-like figure, an "imp of the perverse." This role generally allows the characters to shed light on that which is generally covert. They articulate sexual concerns with clarity, candour, humour and insight - something which women, including women in the theatre, are generally discouraged from doing.[40]

In order to repossess their own sexuality, Feindel's women turn language into a weapon. Because they can speak with such candour on issues which are deemed unspeakable, they are able to exert control. Luv shows no concern for "proper" language and social decorum.

> I can work in any club in this city. I don't even need a booking. I just call the agent. Every week some chick's fucking up. I can work. I don't take shit. I don't need it. I'd rather stay home and watch the soaps. Be with my kids. Nick called me into his orifice yesterday. He looks at me real serious and says,"Luv have you ever thought of trimming your pubic hair?" I say, "Nick, I got the sweetest pussy in this city. I don't need to trim nothing." (28)

There is nothing that this woman will not face up to with her words. She uses language to stand up to abuse and to take charge of her life. Not all the strippers' language is as vivid as Luv's but all of their speeches are characterized by similar candour and directness.

> My main priorities in life are sex, money and food. To the point of compulsion. I enjoy sex more if I charge. The best thing for me is to be in bed with a trick and eating! (Petal Rose, 25)

However, inherent in all of Feindel's texts is a dichotomy between the articulateness of the women on issues pertaining to sex (and the power this gives them as individual subjects) and the fact that their language reiterates their status as toys, love objects or a "particular class of women". Words like "cunt", "pussy" and "tits" participate in a masculine discourse that dismembers and fetishizes the female body. Words like "fuck" imply a relationship of dominance and subordination that again fails to look at the female body as a living, breathing subject with needs and desires of her own. While these women possess the ability to speak freely on their profession, they also make it clear that as strippers, a particular discourse is expected of them. The types of roles they are expected to assume as strippers (Snow White, Country Porn...) imply the use of a particular "survival" or "trade" language.

> You know what I figured out? People don't like you to be too smart. I mean you gotta be smart enough to get your money. I says "No money, no cunt, Honey." Like I'm polite about it. I always say Honey after. Don't just say cunt and walk away! (Marky,19)

Glynis, now working outside the strip, is also aware that a stripper can not reveal her identity in public without fear of harassment. If the stripper wants to function outside the strip she must assume another persona and language. Some of Feindel's characters never escape the "strip-talk" and use it in casual, intimate conversation. Georgia Scott's language is abrasive and vulgar but is embossed with the farcical or the burlesque. Her speech becomes more of a performance than natural utterance. She addresses the listener as if intentionally trying to scandalize and seduce at the same time.

> Here I am up for attempted murder, right for stabbing a guy, and I can hardly keep a straight face. Bastard kicked my fucking dog! Nobody crosses me once and gets the fucking chance again. (51)

Pink Champagne chooses her words for their ability to adorn her, not for their honesty or their power.

> So I'm working step by step to be a movie star. I got an agent for rock videos, films, TV commercials. I play stripper in couple of movies but soon I'm doing straight parts. I play part in Elizabeth Taylor film. She had me cut. I'm too beautiful. (54)

Lil shows a concern for propriety and criticizes the language of the others.

> A customer wants to buy you a drink between shows, what are you going to say, "Fuck You?" No. You act like a lady and you talk to them with respect and that's the way they'll talk to you. (17)

She plays a seducer to her clients and does not lose the role when she addresses her friends in confidence. These last three women use language in the same way Jeannie does in Preparing, or Florence does in Delisle's piece - for effect, as part of an act, like costumes or make-up. Feindel does foreground a lot of language that is generally considered inappropriate, particularly coming from the mouths of women. However, it is a mistake to assume that in all cases the language that these women speak is their own. The language of Lil, Pink Champagne and Georgia Scott reflects the desires of the strip client rather than the discourse of the particular woman.

In Jewel,[41] the "real" that Martha cries for takes over and becomes the central discourse. Joan MacLeod's text makes full use of intimate, spontaneous oral language - a fact she first noted when she discovered that her poetry improved when read aloud.[42] In Jewel, Marjorie's use of language is casual and colloquial. Her sentences are incomplete and tend to wander. The effect is one of unpremeditated honesty and sincerity delivered in casual intimacy.

> Okay. Sometimes I do feel like I'm just visiting here or stuck on the shore like old Wolf, not really able to get involved in anything. And very, very scared. (138)

Marjorie leaves thoughts unfinished, sentences trail off and new paragraphs begin on a different beat. In her use of this kind of language, she shows none of the insecurity that racks Ellen and Heather Rose. Marjorie indulges in utter narcissism as she turns language away from the discourse of "authorities" (like her in-laws, the media, the representatives from the oil company or the widows at her support group) and engages in the exploration of herself.

> I mean this is a very private business if you ask me. Everyone wanting me to come to terms with this.... And all I'm really wanting is for everyone to just leave me alone. (120)

The narrative is ultimately subjective as Marjorie reveals that her story is selective or shaped to suit her present needs.

> Gordon asked me to stay overnight. But I didn't. Or may be I'm telling you lies again .... I did this when I was little too, make up stuff to put in my diary. (134)

Each word that she speaks becomes a step in the discursive process of self understanding. Marjorie gradually rebuilds herself through her text.

> But wearing this [her wedding ring] forever. I don't know. I don't think it's such a great idea anymore. Does that make sense? I hope so. It does for me and I guess that's the important part. (141)

Marie Savard's text Bien à moi[43] attempts to circumvent all patriarchal discourse and embrace, in a much more overt way, the mutable fluid discourse that MacLeod toys with. La Marquise speaks from the edge. She is outside of the dominant culture and she is mad. Diagnosed as hysterical by doctors, her words are heard as nonsense, as folly and as delirium. The grammar and syntax of standard French are fully rejected and replaced with an ungoverned narrative that connects more to the unconscious flow of thought or speech than to coherency of story or argument.

> Ma belle moi
> à qui je n'écris pas souvent et que j'aime à mort,
> petit point, petit point, petit point, point. (23)

Scattered through the text are examples of punning and physical manipulation of words. Standard dictionary definitions are played with and finally subverted.

> je leur ai répondu
> que j'étais une toupie
> que tout l'monde tourne en rond
> toupie or not toupie (46)

Savard's speaker defines herself in this kind of language.

> A crie n'importe quoi
> n'importe où
> n'importe quand
> Est folle (46)

La Marquise knows that women are the marginal ones, the attic dwellers, the outsiders, and their experience is one of outlaws (outside of the law of the father). She knows that women know displacement and off-centredness. She knows, as Ellen knows, that there is no escaping her domestic, private experience as a woman, wife and mother.

> A cette époque, j'avais peu de recul vis-à-vis de moi et beaucoup trop de subjectivité pour prétendre un jour me défaire de cet énorme héritage culturel occidental qu'est le fait d'être moman. (32)

She knows that there is no such thing as an objective, descriptive language that can neatly order women's invisible experiences. There are no words which can ultimately contain the identity that has never before been spoken. But la Marquise embraces the madness that consumes Heather Rose. Savard makes her speaker's marginality her "difference" and she celebrates it. Savard has la Marquise cry out thereby firmly connecting the oral, hysterical cry and the written text through the manipulation of the verb to write (écrire). "Crier" becomes "écrire"(21). The oral cry is integral to the written language that represents la Marquise.

Connected with la Marquise's discourse of madness is an inherent corporeality or suggestion that the female body itself is responsible for the discourse that emerges. Féral argues that the fragmented female text is a product of the fragmented female body. Both are always in search of themselves and the answers are always beyond reach.[44] In its refusal of definition, of diagnosis, la Marquise's literary exploration of herself parallels a physical, corporeal exploration resulting in the discovery of auto-eroticism. As she comes to words, she also comes to her own physical touch, thus realizing her own desire.

> Il est vrai que je viens. Je viens du fond de ma jeunesse... sainte!... Il est vrai que je vis. Je jouis. Je n'ai plus à me le cacher, à me refuser à moi pour mieux me réfugier derrière l'immense subterfuge de ma prudeur et de mon savoir vivre.[...]
>
> Je ferme les yeux
> blottie dans mes bras
> et je me berce doucement pour m'endormir. (40-41)

The connection between "jouissance" and the production of voice or text is also found in the writing of Marchessault. Les vaches de nuit,[45] describes a night order in a female body language that lets the rules of patriarchy fall aside as grammar and syntax are replaced by repetition, alliteration and run-on sentences.

> Le lait coule! Le lait gigle! Le lait coule à flot! Beauté, beauté, bonté blanche. Le lait neige! Le lait goutte, le lait odore! Le lait poudre! le lait rafale! Le lait ouragane! (87)

Sexuality and textuality are connected as the "milk words" deny climactic conclusions and continue on and on ("plus loin, plus loin," 90). Marchessault's writing becomes connected to the desire of her subjects and the milky fluids of the female body.

> Le lait érupte des femelles éclatantes, des mamelles faiseuses de nourriture, en battement de vie. Et ce lait suscite de partout des cris de ralliement, des émeutes d'émotions. L'implacable soif des filles invite le lait à se répandre dans le hauts-fonds du ciel et le doux breuvage ne se coagule pas dans les mamelles, ne glisse pas dans les à-pics du vide. [...] La blanche matière cervicale est un lait de gloire en partance dans les temps de la célébration. (87-88)

The identity of the speaker is not fixed or determined by any entity outside of herself. Instead, identity is fluid, live and endlessly developing. For the young cow/speaker, the leap from the literal "day world" into a night language that flies is a continuous rebirthing .

> Un double enchantement nous lie l'une à l'autre dans un seul corps, quand elle me vêt à mon tour, de ma robe de nuit....

> Etrange, étrange, mais chaque fois que ma mère me revêt de cette robe rouge, j'ai l'impression qu'elle m'enfante de nouveau. (86)

Through this rebirth into language the speaker is able to locate herself in imaginative and unconstrained terms.

> Ma mère est une vache. Avec moi ça fait deux. (83)

The piece concludes with a multitude of voices crying, barking and howling in anticipation of the moment when the control of language will rest in female hands "et dans un cri de passion, nous la nommerons autrement (94)."

It is this mad, fluid, oral and corporeal language that surfaces from the gaps in the rigid discourse of Hollingsworth's, Thompson's and Simons' plays, where the speaker's identity and speech are virtually determined by an oppressive context. Bien à moi and Les vaches de nuit are written with commitment to the madness and loss of identity that frightens, frustrates and occupies Heather Rose and Ellen. Savard and Marchessault re-order language and search out what Féral calls "the words that come before discourse, crazy and porous words that refuse to make a statement, to set down or impose a/the truth, but instead fluctuate, flow, bend and liquefy, obstructing the order of the text."[46]

> Sentences are left dangling, thoughts are cut short and desires go unexpressed. Words are powerless to say things and discourse tries to catch up with them, runs out of steam, falters and comes to a standstill. Silence. Suspension points take over....The sentences will never be finished; the explanation will never be given.[47]

To different and varying degrees, women are in the process of naming themselves in these plays. Their voices are being heard over the noise of the "authorities" that seek female silence. What surfaces is not "Identity" as it can be described and fixed by an author but hesitant, fluid, and discursive explorations of self. These speakers are in the process of coming to know themselves through words. As Féral puts it:

> This is the discourse of non-mastery, in which the subject rejects the criteria of correct syntax and opts for incorrectness and errors as a sign of her own marginality and uncenterdness. There is an incompatibility between correct speech and speaking the truth that no single discourse can bridge. In the gaps, repetitions, modifications, suspension points of an unfinished sentence and exclamation points that signpost the text are revealed the hesitations of a speaker of little mastery of the language who is attentive to her unconscious self where repressed, forbidden feelings re-emerge.[48]

Language and Power

Josette Féral says that women are presented with a choice between "not saying anything" and "saying NOTHING." Féral uses the bold faced, capitalized "NOTHING" to encompass women's own experiences as patriarchal "authority" has named them - irrelevant, mundane, trivial, essentialist. Female experience is "NOTHING" because it has no subjective representation or voice in the public world; rather it is private and personal and a-political. Accordingly, the record of these experiences belongs in private places such as diaries and letters, but not in books or on stages. The playwright of the monodrama imposes "NOTHING" upon the empty page/stage and makes the private public (a comparable action would be the publication of a journal). In so doing, she fills the void of NOTHING or actively says NO to NOTHING. This action is political because it challenges the naming practices of "authority."

La nef des sorcières,[49] developed as a collective, is perhaps the most self-consciously political of all of the pieces. Its understanding of the kind of feminist critique that Féral uses is explicit and its purpose is to overtly challenge and to change. This political self-consciousness is undoubtably due to the nature of the collective. The production was directed by Luce Guilbeault, and members of the collective included Pol Pelletier and Louisette Dussault - actors and directors whose names are associated with feminist theatre. Among the writers of the piece were Marie-Claire Blais, Nicole Brossard and France

Théoret, the first known for her fiction and the other two for their writing of feminist fiction-theory. The final text of *La nef* is the product of actor/writer collaborators addressing common concerns in contemporary feminist terms.

Each of the speakers of *la nef* is, like all of the speakers examined, speaking on her own and her text is a dramatic representation of the dropping away of the memorised "phallo-text." "L'Actrice" once had a script - words that she learned to speak by heart:

> Mon texte, je le rêvais par coeur, j'en rêvais
> Par coeur, mes coeurs.
> M'écoeure.
> Je crois ce que je dis parce que je le dis par coeur.
> Bam, bam, bam dans la tête, les mots
> Avec le gros marteau pénis. (17)

But now she has forgotten them (17). She is tired of repeating other people's words that make her nothing but an object of desire. The menopausal woman has similarly just learned how to speak. She too is emerging from a world of silence and is trying her tongue.

> LES TEMPS SONT VENUS
> La femme oubliée, retirée, muette, méditative, APPARAIT
> Elle parle, Elle est solide
> Elle est neuve. (29)

She will proceed to name her wilderness in her own language as an empowered subject. Coming out of her powerful statement "je peux parler," (24) is the promise that hence forth nothing will go unspoken. France Théoret's factory worker refuses to wed and makes a subversive move toward feminine independence outside of patriarchal social bondage (34). It infuriates her that this is not enough, that she is ostracized for choosing as she has.

> Pourquoi je pourrais pas réaliser mes rêves comme les autres?
> [...] c'est parce'que je suis pas mariée que j'ai pas le droit de vivre
> moi. (35)

She questions a world that insists she behave in a certain way and proceeds to speak her way out of the margins by describing her particular experience.

> Ca fait que je me lève le matin un peu avant six heures parce que je demeure à Sainte-Dorothée. Je prends ma douche, je me frictionne partout mais surtout aux genoux. Je m'habille, je déjeûne puis je pars... (32)

Her life is "mundane", "trivial", "unimportant" but she tells it, she names it and that challenges all reductive assumptions. Odette Gagnon's "La Fille" also asks why women are always taught to speak to someone's else's idea of "good." She realizes that until women's experience is codified in language things will never change: "Ca tombera pas du ciel, y a tout un grand ménage à faire..."(49). "Marcelle I" reiterates the urgency of "La Fille's" statements.

> Il y a peu de temps encore nos voix ne traversaient pas la douceur de nos étreintes nous allions mourir étoufées de secrets inutiles. (62)

Marcelle I speaks about trying to articulate a new woman who is not reducible to body parts, or body functions.

> Qui est-elle?
> C'est une femme. Oui elle est familière
> mais on ne peut affirmer qu'on la connaît comme le mari
> qui dit de sa femme "je la connais". C'est quelqu'un
> cette amie d'une heure, d'un soir, de toute une vie,
> quelqu'un dont on doute notre lien c'est de créer
> des liens nouveaux qui n'appartiennent pas à un monde
> d'ordre et de lois c'est de chercher
> en l'une et en l'autre ce qui pourrait être vrai
> mais rien est parfait. (62)

Clearly describing a foreign landscape, an untold experience, and an undiscovered woman requires a new language, or at least new usage of the old one. "Marcelle II" calls for a complete renaming that would represent women as subjects. She exclaims, "Moi, je suis pas morte." She warns of the power of women's voices once they succeed in expressing themselves: "...une montagne avec une voix. Prenez garde à la voix, ça gronde. La patience s'épuise" (71). The concluding piece, "L'Ecrivain," looks at the qualities of this subversive renaming:

> Une femme appuie savamment sur son crayon.

> Mais elle n'écrit pas de poème d'amour.
> Elle dessine des ventres plats. Des vulves totales.
> Elle change l'ordre des mots. (73)

Nicole Brossard says that "to be traversed by the voice of a woman, to be inhabited by the voice of a woman, is a very serious thing. It is a very serious thing in the sense that what resonates within us like a call, resounds suddenly like a *raison d'être*.... The voice gives us reason. In the eyes of patriarchy, however, when women have both voice and reason, they become *unsound*." [50] One need only remember that it is because la Marquise speaks her anger that she is marginalized as mad (the ex-centric eccentric). Not only do the figures present in her life (her doctor, husband and son) diagnose her as a hysteric, but critics of the performance reported that she suffered from a "dépréciation nerveuse" and described her as "décousu, farfelu et souvent absolument aberrant."[51] Nicole Brossard and France Théoret admit that this kind of reaction is to be expected:

> Les paroles de femmes ne se rendent jamais à terme, elle avortent dans la crise, la dépression nerveuse ou le fou rire. Le mot habite le corps de femmes, mais quand il en sort, il en sort comme un non-sens. Comme si les femmes n'émettaient en parlant qu'une série de lapsus.[52]

In their preface to La nef des sorcières, Brossard and Théoret describe how this uneasiness and displacement can be transformed, through theatre, into action. The monologue, by bringing private language and private writing to the public stage, picks up "la voix maternelle", and places it into history.[53] Women need only to name their experience in the first person (I/je) and then to each other (we) in public, and new histories and new canons are made - "authority" is finitely undermined. In the words of Josette Féral:

> Repossessing her past, using words to exorcise what has never been said about her, she cross-examines the future, where her place will henceforth be different. This seemingly innocuous voyage of exploration, which penetrates to the depths of feminine

> suffering, cannot, for that very reason, be anything less than subversive.[54]

Not all of the pieces are as overt as La nef in their criticism of authority and authoritarian control over language. However, each piece is characterized by an urgency of tone that suggests that what is spoken is important beyond the private domain of the speaker. What is being said must be made public. La Marquise comments on the danger of silence and the potential loss of communicative skills, as the voice sinks, like Ellen's does, into complacency out of embarrassment.

> SI J'EN PARLE AUJOURD'HUI, C'EST QUE JE TROUVE QUE CELA EST DEVENU UNE SITUATION PRESQUE TENABLE ET JE ME DEMANDE CE QUI POURRAIT EN ETRE CHANGE AU NIVEAU EVENEMENTIEL DE MES MASSES. (24)

In this sense, the discursive language in Margaret Hollingsworth's and Judith Thompson's plays questions the oppression of marginalized cultures faced with a bulldozer dominant culture. In Wendy Lill's play, language challenges traditional approaches to native issues and looks at the effects of imposing dominant culture on the cultures of the margins.[55] Joan MacLeod's words dare industry and government to assume more responsibility for their workers. MacLeod also takes subtle jabs at men who enjoy the public world, while women remain at home.[56] Janet Feindel's language attempts to confront her public with both the sexist and classist assumptions that are levied against the women of the sex trade. The title of her play reflects not only the kind of contempt that strippers face, but how these assumptions leave these women in a subhuman class outside society, unprotected by its laws.[57] Pamela Boyd remarks that until now "there hasn't been a generation of women fighting for the right to be out there" in the public world, and the language of her play addresses this fundamental inequality.[58] Louisette Dussault makes a "geste audacieux" by suggesting that women kill "la mère police." She thus addresses an entire social code which places the heavy burdens of child care and home management on the shoulders of women. Beverly Simons' and Jeanne-Mance Delisle's plays address all of society and question the reasons women are obliged to "read for the parts" that stifle their creativity and drive them to resentment and madness. Jovette Marchessault seeks to recreate, through language, a female mythology that displaces "the heavenly Father from his sky kingdom" and locates the origins of life in the woman's body.[59]

All women's monodrama is subversive because it challenges the authors/authorities that have determined our world. When a woman writes, her text is necessarily subversive simply because she must write against her silence. Though her writing may not always be as cryptic and fractured as the writing of Savard or Guilbeault, the woman playwright's writing will be different. It will be full of gaps, of oral explosions, of fluid and constantly shifting meanings. She will write against "authority". She will not impose "truths" or "universals". She will turn the mirror around to illustrate that what we have taken for "universals" are actually sexist or racist or classist. She will not fix identity in stone for identity, like language, cannot be mastered and fixed. She will intimately connect herself to her speaking character. The writer creates her subject, who in turn re-creates the writer by giving her voice. Together, playwright and subject proceed to map out their wilderness. This l'Ecrivain describes as a "grammaire en erection."

> Women say themselves, tell their own stories and explore this nothing of which they are made, to discover that this nothing is commensurate with their universe, a universe in which everyone, including men, ends up by finding her or himself and taking his or her place. A vast picture of the world is presented, this time from the feminine point of view....[60]

This process cannot be discouraged or stopped. It is urgent. As decreed by la Marquise, "Je ne peux pas tarder tellement je me manque"(27). Perhaps Nicole Brossard put it best in her manifesto for women's writing, L'Amer: "Ecrire je suis femme est pleine de conséquences."[61]

NOTES

[1] Louise Dupré, "From Experimentation to Experience: Quebecois Modernity in the Feminine," A Mazing Space, eds. Smaro Kamboureli, Shirley Neuman (Edmonton: Longspoon Press, 1986) 355.

[2] Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon, 1985) 248.

[3] Feminist linguists hypothesize that all speaking, reading and writing is gender marked. This hypothesis has led to studies which seek to uncover the difference between male and female use of language. Research with these objectives has been inconclusive. The Kramer, Thorne and Henley study states, "What is notable is how few expected differences have been firmly substantiated by empirical studies of actual speech." [Cheris Kramer, Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley, "Perspectives on Language and Communication," Signs 3 (1978): 638-51.] Though linguistic studies have not succeeded in uncovering a "genderlect", this does not erase the inherent sexism in language that designates the female as subordinate and other. Carolyn Burke, one of the leading contributors to feminist linguistic theory, argues that all language shows the mark of the dominant masculine ideology and that women, essentially "other" to this ideology, are speaking in a foreign tongue. ["Report from Paris: Women's Writing and the Women's Movement," Signs 3 (Summer, 1978): 844.] Though difference cannot be found between the actual language used by men and women, certain strategies and styles seem to be common to women's texts as they write against this inherent sexism. Radical cries have been made by linguists such as Annie LeClerc and Dale Spender for a revolutionary linguism or a non-oppressive language. Others, like Chantal Chawaff, have called for a deintellectualisation of writing. [See Annie LeClerc, "Paroles de femme," trans. Isabelle Courtivron and Chantal Chawaf and "La chair linguistic," trans. Rochette-Ozelle, both in New French Feminisms, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle Courtivron (Amherst, Mass: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980) and Dale Spender, Man Made Language (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).] Feminists have also been drawn to critical approaches which link women's writing to Freudian and Post-Freudian theories of identity. Developed primarily by the French psychoanalytic school dominated by Lacan, these theories locate women outside of or apart from language and naming. Essentially, the castration metaphor is extended in order to explain why women write differently. Language is learned at the Oedipal phase when the child acquires a gender identity. This stage reveals to both male and female children that the phallus is the primary signifier, embodying all of the laws of patriarchal culture. Given this, the little girl's access to language is always negative, characterized by an identification with absence or lack. Thus the female writer experiences torment in trying to write, resulting in linguistic and literary disadvantage. Revisions of this phallocentric model have been attempted by such feminist psychoanalytic critics as Annis Pratt [" The New Feminist Criticisms," Beyond Intellectual Sexism: A New Woman, A New Reality, ed. Joan I. Roberts (New York: Longman, 1976)]; Nancy Chodorow ["The Reproduction of Mothering: A Methodological Debate," Signs 6 (Spring, 1981): 482-514]; Elizabeth Abel ["(E)Merging Identities: The Dynamics of Female Friendship in Contemporary Fiction by Women," Signs 6 (Spring, 1981):434)]; and Luce Irigaray, [This Sex Which Is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977)] who use the premises developed by Freud and Lacan and invert them in order to uncover a mother tongue as alternative to the "non du père." Chodorow posits that in the pre-Oedipal phase (the Imaginary phase) the girl's identity is positive and built upon sameness and identification with the mother. Irigaray suggests that traces of this pre-Oedipal phase appear in "le parler femme" which emerges spontaneously when women speak together. "Womanspeak" is like chatter. It is capricious, temperamental, perturbed

and goes off in all directions. It is a discourse which rejects fixed and immutable meaning and "would transform meaning into a continuous flow within the text." As explained by Josette Féral:

> The text would explode in all directions at once, exactly the way woman's body (and sex organs) explode into fragments. The fragmented body constantly touches/is in touch with itself. Like this body, women's worlds touch each other again and again, always being interwoven, embracing one another, but at the same time thrusting apart, to avoid becoming fixed or rigid. ["Writing and Displacement: Women in Theatre," Modern Drama 27.4 (1984): 550.]

A related school of feminist literary criticism links biological difference with literary production. In this school, women's writing proceeds from the body, which stands as the primary source of imagery. Within these theories, fostered mainly by French feminists such as Adrienne Rich and Hélène Cixous, lies the assumption that anatomy becomes text and that sexuality and textuality are intimately correlated. [See Rich, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976); and Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, Signs 1 (Summer, 1976): 875-95.] Although critics argue that feminist schools which conceive of women's texts as determined by biology risk reducing women to the essentialism that has marginalized them in the past, the concept of "écriture féminine" advocated by Hélène Cixous provides a way of addressing women's texts which reasserts the value of the feminine and identifies the feminist project as the analysis of difference (Showalter 249-252).

[4] Robin Lakoff indicates in the preface to her book, Language and Women's Place (New York: Octagon, 1975), that there are two ways of approaching the study of women's language, depending on whether one asks, "What do women say in language?" or "How do women use language?"

[5] Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) 23-35.

[6] Showalter 262.

[7] Christyl Verduyn, "Ecrire le moi au féminin," Journal of Canadian Studies 20.2 (Summer, 1985): 18-28.

[8] Very little biographical information is available on Marie Savard and Jeanne-Mance Delisle, and I was not able to draw comparisons between their personal lives and their texts, though I suspect that one could.

[9] Louisette Dussault, "Itinéraire pour une moman," introduction, Moman (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1981)30.

[10] Dussault, "Itinéraire" 31.

[11] Pamela Boyd, "Play Dips into Diaper Pail," interview by Susan Devins, Toronto Star 28 Feb. 1986: D16; all subsequent quotations in this paragraph were drawn from this feature.

[12] Janet Feindel, introduction, A Particular Class of Women (Vancouver: Lazara Pub.1988) 5.

[13] Janet Feindel, "Developing A Particular Class of Women," Canadian Theatre Review 59 (Summer 1989): 41.

[14] Wendy Lill, "Writer in Non-Residence," interview by Doug Smith, Newest Review (April/May, 1989): 53.

[15] Wendy Lill, interview by Judith Rudakoff, Fair Play (Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1990) 46.

[16] Joan MacLeod, interview by Rita Much, *Fair Play* 195.

[17] MacLeod, interview by Much 197.

[18] Margaret Hollingsworth, interview by Judith Rudakoff, *Fair Play* 145.

[19] Margaret Hollingsworth, interview by Robert Wallace and Cynthia Zimmerman, *The Work: Conversations with English Canadian Playwrights* (Toronto: Coach House, 1982) 92.

[20] Barbara Godard, "Flying Away with Language," introduction, *Lesbian Triptych* by Jovette Marchessault, trans. Yvonne M. Klein (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1985)11.

[21] Dussault, "Itinéraire" 26.

[22] Josette Féral, "Writing and Displacement:Women in Theatre," *Modern Drama* 24.7 (Dec. 1984): 558.

[23] Godard, "Mapmaking: A Survey of Feminist Criticism," Gynocritics/La gynocritique: Feminist Approaches to Writing by Canadian and Québécoises Women/ Approaches féministes à l'écriture des canadiennes et québécoises, ed. Barbara Godard (Oakville, Ont.: ECW Press, 1987) 1-30.

[24] Godard, "Mapmaking" 16.

[25] Godard, "Mapmaking" 18-19.

[26] The obvious rebuttal to Godard's hypothesis is that though women's texts may be primarily oral, theatrical texts in general are spoken discourse. Theatre, in fact, differs from other forms of literary expression precisely because it is an oral discourse mapping out how humanity speaks. Keir Elam postulates that: "The speech event is, in its own right, the chief form of interaction in the drama" [*The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London: Methuen, 1980) 156-57]. My argument does not attempt to contradict this principle nor do I wish to assert that oral discourse is the privileged domain of women playwrights. Rather, it seems that women writers have been drawn to the theatre as a form precisely because it permits the kind of orality that is suitable to their experience.

[27] Nicole Brossard and France Théoret, "Préface," *La nef des sorcières* by Brossard et al, (Montreal: Quinze 1976)10-11.

[28] Margaret Hollingsworth, *Diving*, (Toronto: Coach House,1985); all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[29] Beverley Simons, *Preparing* (Vancouver: Talonbooks,1975) 23-37; all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[30] Nicole Brossard, "Memory: Hologram of Desire," *Tessera* 13 (Fall 1988):45.

[31] Brossard, "Memory" 45.

[32] Marguerite Duras and Xavière Gauthier, *Les Parleuses* (Paris, 1974) 8, quoted in Féral 560.

[33] Judith Thompson, *Pink* (Toronto: Coach House: 1989); all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[34] Wendy Lill, *The Occupation of Heather Rose*, *NeWest Plays by Women*, eds. Diane Bessai and Don Kerr (Edmonton: Newest Press,1987) 63-94; all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[35] Pamela Boyd, *Inside Out*, *NeWest Plays by Women* 95-136; all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[36] Louisette Dussault, Moman (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1981); all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[37] Dussault, "Itnéraire" 26

[38] Jeanne-Mance Delisle, Florence-Geneviève-Martha, Un reel ben beau, ben triste (Montréal: Editions de la pleine lune, 1980) 145-176; all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[39] Janet Feindel, A Particular Class of Woman (Vancouver: Lazara Publications, 1988); all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[40] Feindel, "Developing" 39.

[41] Joan MacLeod, Jewel (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 1989); all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[42] MacLeod, interview by Much 191.

[43] Marie Savard, Bien à moi (Montréal: Edition de la pleine lune, 1979); all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[44] Féral 550.

[45] Jovette Marchessault, Les vaches de nuit, Tryptique lesbien (Montreal: Editions de la plein lune, 1979); all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[46] Féral 560.

[47] Féral 561.

[48] Féral 560.

[49] Nicole Brossard et al, La nef des sorcières (Montréal: Quinze, 1976); all subsequent references to this play, in this chapter and in those that follow, refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses.

[50] Brossard, "Memory" 46.

[51] Martial Dassylva, rev. of Bien à moi and La Duchesse de Langeais, by Marie Savard and Michel Tremblay, La Presse 19 fév.1970: 27. Michel Bélair, writing for Le Devoir ("La Marquise et la Duchesse: deux grandes soeurs!," rev. of Bien à Moi, by Marie Savard, Le Devoir 21 fév. 1970: 17) also criticized Savard's text for its lack of structure and wondered how a woman so crazy could realistically be so lucid.

[52] Brossard et Théoret 9.

[53] Brossard et Théoret 8.

[54] Féral 557-8.

[55] Lill, interview by Rudakoff 46-47.

[56] MacLeod, interview by Much 202.

[57] Feindel, "Developing" 41.

[58] Boyd, "Play Dips" D16.

[59] Godard "Flying" 24.

[60] Féral 552.

[61] Nicole Brossard, L'Amer (Montréal: L'Hexagone, 1977) 53.

CHAPTER TWO
Story-Telling and Memory Action:
The Structure of the Monodrama

Reception becomes a problematic issue when the private utterance is made public. Private writing need only be understood by the writer herself and can afford a spontaneity and a mad incoherence. But if the text is to be made public, it must be structured to allow the spectator access. The listener must be able to receive the communicated message if he/she is expected to act for political change. Theoretically this creates a problem for the woman's text, which cannot appropriate "authoritative" traditional ways of meaning without adopting a less fluid discourse. If the public text must have a structure beyond the nebulous qualities of oral language, does "playing solitaire" ultimately give in to traditional forms of dramatic expression?

About Story and Plot

Manfred Pfister, in his structuralists' workbook of dramatic theory, The Theory and Analysis of Drama, summarizes that "ever since Aristotle's Poetics, critics have agreed unanimously that the macro structure (of drama) is founded on story."[1] Conceding that critics have been unable to reach a consensus on the precise definition of "story," Pfister defines it as a "purely chronologically arranged succession of actions and occurrences." "Story necessarily has one or more human or anthropomorphic subjects, a temporal dimension, indicating the passing of time and a spatial dimension giving a sense of space."[2] "Story" is not the presentation itself but rather the subject of the presentation. Thus, "story" is the pre-textual (before the text), historical, objective, unsculpted subject or matter of drama.

Plot is the subsequent intra-textual (within the text) rearrangement of story. Plot gives a more detailed organizational micro-structure or surface structure to story by varying presupposed chronological and spatial dimensions and by structuring story into unique perspectives. One could say that, in Pfister's analysis, "story" is history and "plot" is art.

The structure of Judith Thompson's Pink is a good illustration of Pfister's model. "Story" in Pink can be discussed on two levels. There is the "story/history" of apartheid authored by the dominant white culture.[3] It is a story of racial supremacy based upon colour. It is a story of privilege and power. A subset of this story is the story of Lucy, a young white girl who has grown up in South Africa and who is coming to an awareness of the violence her ignorance has committed. Lucy's monologue is a "plot" derived from these "stories." Through fragmented segments of speech in which Lucy addresses Nellie's coffin, plot works through Lucy's relationship with Nellie. By juxtaposing memory with the emotion of the present situation, plot exposes the process through which the discourse of racism allows for the empowerment of those who perpetuate it. Gradually, through the conscious manipulation of Lucy's language and speech, Thompson's plot reveals Lucy coming to an understanding of her own particular guilt.

Pamela Boyd's Inside Out initially appears to operate upon the same principles of "story" and "plot". In her play the "story/history" is "motherhood" and all of the sacrifices and joys which that institution entails. Specificity is added to this story through the introduction of a case study example. Ellen's story is typical and corresponds to the larger story. Ellen is a completely dedicated and loving mother and wife. She has sacrificed her career as an actress in order to assure the comfort and happiness of her husband and son. Boyd's "plot" initially serves this story in accordance with Pfister's methodology. The use of the monologue format and the introduction of the puppet child allow for an intimate focusing on Ellen's maternity. However, when Ellen slams down the telephone receiver on her husband, the plot becomes disturbing primarily because it deviates from both the familiar story of motherhood and from Ellen's life story. Her darkly humorous monologue does NOT reflect what a mother should be and furthermore it is NOT what Ellen is. She begins to chart out a "what if..." scenario that runs in direct opposition to both the story of motherhood and the actual story of her life. She imagines what she would have said had the dinner gone as planned. She speaks to her guests and serves food, all the while imagining what it would be like if she could speak her mind. She hears her baby cry and she imagines picking him up and suffocating him with a pillow. Boyd acknowledges that the pre-textual "stories" that presuppose her plot are stories of the intellectual and domestic subordination of women and she challenges these "stories" by imagining "intra-textual' alternatives all over them. On the level of representation ("plot"), "story" is rewritten. Ellen rewrites the story of wives and mothers so as to toy with, machiavellian as it may seem, an empowered existence.

Boyd's play challenges Pfister's assumption that story is entirely pre-textual and presupposes plot. Ultimately, what happens in Inside Out is that the hierarchical structure of drama, as defined by Pfister with plot existing as an ordering of "story," is inverted. Instead, plot becomes the space in which to re-invent story. Plot becomes a documentation of the process by which stories and thus history can be conceived.

I am suggesting that the intra-textual development of story through plot is the macro-structure of the women's monologue. If it is accepted that women's experience has been designated NOTHING by patriarchal historical documentation (see Chapter One), then one can assume that there is no history, no story of women outside of the process of writing. Though the stories may exist, they are unknown secrets. They have been labelled unimportant and have been forgotten by women and men alike. If women's writing reflects an association with unmitigated oral discourse (see Chapter One) then it seems possible to conclude that the subsequent structure of these texts would be similarly rooted in the immediate process of exploration and discovery. When a woman writes, her "plot" necessarily presupposes her "story", for it is through "plot" that she defines her story (and herself) against "history." As Nicole Brossard and France Théoret argue, "Les femmes ne sont pas dans l'Histoire, elles n'ont que des histoires, ne font que des histoires."[4]

Action vs. Event vs. Memory

Breaking structure down even more, Pfister says that drama is constituted by "actions", "events", or a combination of both.[5] An "action" is made up of three components: the existing situation, the attempt to change it and the new situation. Included in the "action" is the need, on the part of the components of the story, to change the existing situation. The "event" replaces the "action" when the subjects of the story are incapable of making a deliberate choice or of affecting their environment in any way. The narrative and seemingly "actionless" structure of the monologue could easily mislead one to conclude that the microstructure of the genre is based in the "event".

Diving opens with Viveca cautiously approaching a diving board, preparing to jump to the command of a male voice. It is evident that Viveca is reluctant, but the play nevertheless resolves itself with her dive and her return to the board to jump again as a circus dog jumps through a hoop. It is people and "events" outside of and apart from Viveca that determine her actions. She can only respond. The Occupation of Heather Rose proceeds to expose a series of conditions that have "occupied" the soul of Heather and rendered her incapable of further action. The speaker is presented fully disempowered and ineffective in transforming her environment. Native issues are far too complex to be resolved through the simple efforts of a humanitarian nurse. The situation is tangled beyond resolution and the result is stagnation, frustration and madness. Inside Out presents a character that is locked up inside the prison of wifedom and motherhood. As the play progresses Ellen's isolation is revealed in its completeness. All of her attempts to transform or escape from this prison are systematically thwarted by "events". Preparing, conforming perfectly to Pfister's "event" analysis, presents a woman in various stages of her life preparing for important occasions and rituals that her world dictates she must participate in. From dinner with her parents to her own death, Jeannie's life lies out of her control. The first two monologues of Florence-Geneviève-Martha are similarly event-oriented. Both Florence and Geneviève are caught up in an endless cycle of heterosexual courtship/marriage "events" in which they attempt to secure a mate. The "l'Echantillon" monologue from La nef des sorcières seems to have been modelled on Pfister's articulation of a futile condition. The woman describes herself as a cog in a great wheel. As spinster factory worker, she has been caught up in a dehumanizing and mundane routine of poverty. She is obliged to contend with sexism and degradation on a daily basis. Society will never forgive her for defying its rules and remaining single. It has been decreed that she will have no control over the direction or quality of her life. She is alone and fears that nothing will ever change (38).

Yet, to conclude that the structure of these plays is so simple that it depends only upon women's responses to conditions imposed by an imperialist, capitalist, conformist and sexist society is to reduce the speakers of these plays to the status of subordinate and passive actors. To say that these plays are essentially actionless and structured by event only is merely to state that women are submissive and accepting, operating without discrimination in a cycle that labels them as passive. This would undermine all of the efforts discussed in the previous chapter in which women were said to be writing their way into subjectivity. There is an energy lying behind even the most pessimistic of these pieces that extends beyond Pfister's event analysis.

Evidently there is "action" in these plays. In accordance with Pfister, each of these plays addresses the present situation of the speaker and the need to change that situation. Each of the monodramas concludes with the presentation of a different situation, though the difference may be as imperceptible as a minute increase in subjective consciousness. The locutionary force of all of these female voices is that something must change (see Chapter One). As Gagnon's "sample" of a woman says, "faudrait que ça soit fini" (38). The root of this anticipated change lies in the telling of women's stories. "Telling" becomes the primary "action" of each of the texts. "It is only when we speak the legend of our lives," says Nicole Brossard, "that we are able to engender new scenes, invent new characters, produce new replies, thereby making our way into the present."[6] It is my hypothesis that this action of telling is founded in memory and that memory becomes the key to the microstructure of the women's monologue. Pfister's element of "action" becomes specifically "memory-action."

The tension between history and memory is a part of the age-old culture/nature debate in which nature is associated with memory, spontaneity and oral discourse and culture is associated with history, authority and literary discourse .[7] The memory-guided text is the antithesis of the historically guided text, which is easily able to distinguish a pre-textual "story". Through memory-action, the definable superstructure of story is convoluted as the piece uncovers, recollects and recreates story through the presented stage plot.

In Diving, Viveca's complete integration into the cyclical pattern of predetermined "events" does not come without some resistance from memory. It is important to note that Hollingsworth's "plot" does not progress along direct linear lines. As discussed in Chapter One, there are moments in which memory temporarily reverses the direction of the plot. When Viveca's voice surfaces through the gaps in her memorised monologue, she has retreated into recollection.

> My mother gave me a dog for my birthday. It was a very small dog, she said no one would notice it. It used to whine, and when the caretaker asked about the noise I told him it was me. He told me I should see someone. He used to come to my door and listen and I'd watch him listening through the peep hole. (116)

While Viveca is caught up in a cycle that she cannot control, memory allows for momentary transcendence of the routine and for the emergence of her story. It is memory that permits Viveca's voice to escape from underneath the enforced quotations of those who seek to control her. It is Viveca's memory-action that exposes the spectator to her dreams and her desires.

In the monologues of Delisle's play, memory-action is toyed with in more detail. The "Florence" piece begins with Florence attempting to answer a letter that she has received from an amorous pen pal. This "action", however, is undermined as she finds that she is unable to describe herself with the romantic vocabulary her correspondent has established as normative (see Chapter One). She sees her self-portrait as a reflection of the desires of her correspondent and cannot continue. She retreats into memory. The piece loses grasp of linear time and begins to roam almost randomly through Florence's past.

> Quand j'me rappelle mon père, j'vois deux gros yeux bruns toujours sévères. J'l'ai toujours r'gardé du coin d'l'oeil. Quand y m'parlait, c'tait pour me faire faire des commissions. J'voulais ben obéir mais ça m'tintait dans les oreilles pis j'comprenais pus rien. (153)

Momentarily snapped back into the present, Florence realizes the explosiveness of her recollections and she is nervous and uncomfortable. The present becomes an unsatisfying place to be, now that the past has been rediscovered.

> Ma mère est pus là. Chu tu-seule dans la vie. J'travaille parce qu'y faut travailler. J'fais du 9 à 5. J'tape à la machine. J'entasse des chiffres. A cinq heures, j'rentre chez nous. J'mange. Je r'garde la T.V. Je prends ma douche. J'prends une pilule pour les nerfs. J'me couche. (155)

Though Florence still suffers from the inertia and extreme frustration she felt at the play's beginning, she has not remained an insignificant pawn in a greater scheme of "events." She has recollected her past and she has made what was silent speak.

"Geneviève" begins in the present tense. The speaker is waiting for the "event" of her husband's return from work. She describes dressing herself, cooking and arranging the house as the meticulous preparation for the "event" of seduction. As if searching for alternatives, Geneviève falls into recollection:

> J'me rappelle quand j'avais quatorze ans. J'tais allée aux fraises au bout d'la terre chez nous. Y avait envie d'faire un orage. La robe me collait aux cuisses, j'avais chaud. J'tais écrasée d'vant une talle ben rouge quand j'me sus aperçu que quecque chose grouillait dans l'foin. (162-63)

The memories continue to come, increasing in sensual intensity and detail as Geneviève progresses. Once returned to the present she, like Florence, is able to recognize her situation and name her oppression. She understands that from the cradle, the sexes battle like enemies. She learns that she has been duped into playing the coy, cold virgin for a powerful seducer. Through memory-action the plot is structured around the discovery of a personal story which writes over what Geneviève interprets as patriarchal "history:"

> Les filles sont encore, dans l'fond, des p'tits lièvres effarouchés
> qui courent dans tous les sens pour pas manquer la vie!
> Des p'tits lièvres effarouchés qui s'laissent apprivoiser sans
> choisir parce qu'y on peur de rester tu-seuls, parce qu'y on plus
> peur de rester tu-seuls que d'tomber dans un piège. (166)

Martha boldly begins her address with recollection. She does not fall into memory as an alternative to the present reality; instead she actively embraces its power. Like the other two she is drawn to the memories of her childhood.

> Moé, ma mère, c'tait une artiste, une vraie.
> Quand j'l'ai compris, elle était déjà partie!...
>
> A l'école, j'tais l'bouffon. A Maison, c'tait mon pere qui parlait.
> (169)

Martha immediately and consciously locates herself within her own past. From there she begins to explain how she grew to a critical awareness of the sexism inherent in her society.

> J'ai grandi... J'commençais à penser qu'les pères, ça pouvait pas rire, parce que c'tait trop noble, c'tait encadré...

> Jusqu'au jour où j'en ai vu un s'montrer l'cul à ses filles pis sacrer aprés la bonn' femme qui souffrait en silence au nom de l'amour! Là, j'ai senti que c'tait pus drôle. Qu'y avait pus rien d'drôle. La religion, c'tait sérieux. (170)

Again, "plot" is more than an ordering device for story. It is the actual archaeological excavation of story. Brossard describes this memory-action as an un-recounting that goes against the grain of history.

> This countdown is exciting because for us it opens on creation. In telling her story backwards, she who writes peels away each successive layer of lies laid in her during the obligatory and imposed memorization of the patriarchal account.[8]

Feminist critics have found women's texts to make great use of memory as a structural framework for writing. Memory provides the fundamental organizational principles necessary for story telling, yet does not contradict what was outlined in the previous chapter as women's tendency toward a more oral, spontaneous discourse that resists authorial voice. Furthermore, the process of delving into one's memory proves to be a useful way of uncovering and making speak the wilderness that has been silent for so long. Writers, like Louky Bersianik, call for women to bring what has been forgotten back into focus, reinstating, within memory, the subjectivity of women:

> Il nous faudra installer le MOI de nos mémoires sur the TOI de l'histoire pour le faire s'éffonder. My mory instead of his story.[9]

Memory, stresses Canadian poet Marlene Philip, is essential for women's survival.[10]

Yet the feminist project of uncovering and celebrating women's memory is no simple task. Bersianik argues that women suffer from amnesia and have no sense of a collective past or power. Like livestock, they have been blindly following in each other's footsteps.

> Le grenier aux images a été pillé; la boîte aux souvenirs saccagée, anéantie. Il ne reste que des on-dit, que des qu'en-dira-t-on, ne restent que des ondines, que les ondes de choc des moirures d'un seul pan de la mémoire, que sa partie chatoyante et sans gloire. Il ne reste, monstrueuse, que l'amnésie des femmes. Que cette absence congénitale de l'organe de la réminiscence.... [11]

The process of recollection is not as simple as sitting down at the typewriter. Poet Erin Mouré queries, "How do you meet yourself once you're grown?" [12] Mouré alludes to what Nicole Brossard has called "memory blanks" and wonders exactly how the woman writer goes about working through memories that remain fragmented.

Representational and Presentational Memory

The "plot " of The Occupation of Heather Rose is one woman's recollection of recent events. The play's structure forms itself around memories as they come back to the speaker. Heather begins with her childhood and moves through her experiences in the North in rough chronological order. At first her memory is "presentational." She speaks in the past tense, mediating recollection with the irony of distance:

> I remember that first day barrelling through space in that hollow hairspray can of a plane, the sound of a thousand mosquitoes approaching my pillow in the dark, the hard cold metal wing vibrating against my thigh, long pink and purple tubes of land forming then breaking off into water, then land, more water, more wing... and in front of me, Ray the pilot, lighting one Players after another, blowing lazy circles of smoke back towards my waiting nostrils. (67)

"Presentational" memory is also found in Diving and Florence-Geneviève-Martha, where the speaker is allowed to narrate a story. However, in Lill's play, this voice is not constant. Heather gradually becomes submersed in her recollections and begins to relive them. Her story becomes "representational" as she re-inacts recollected conversations. The objective distance she initially had is lost. Heather recalls one discussion she had with the chief of the reserve who informed her that supplies were hard to get at Snake Lake. She relives her response verbatum:

> "Hey excuse me chief! but I *know* all about the problems. (I learned it all at my orientation week.) I want to talk about *solutions*. I've been thinking about an exercise club for women to improve their self image...women always need to improve their self image. And a good food club to work on our eating habits...." (73)

Heather, like Delisle's characters, is more comfortable recollecting than she is in the present tense. Her fear of the immediate moment is most clearly reflected in the anxiety she feels when suddenly back in the here and now (69). In order to avoid having to return to the present where she would have to offer interpretive explanation, Heather opts for the past. "Representational" recollection is increasingly favoured as the play progresses. Objective distance is decreased in the second act as Heather continues to dive further into her memory to unwind the tangles of her adventures. At times Heather assumes all the voices participating in recollected discussion (75-76). As the second act continues, cohesive structure breaks down completely and it is apparent that Heather is learning her story in the present. Recollection is bringing her in touch with that story for the first time. A despairing black humour replaces the light-hearted, good-natured comedy, and the spectator becomes submerged in the darkness of Heather's memory.

> Break up. The breaking up of winter - that winter that I thought would never end.
>
> Break up.
> [...]
>
> When I looked out into that darkness there was a glare from the window and I looked... different. Looked like a photograph of me... only as an old woman. (93)

The "event" that the play anticipates - the arrival of Miss Jackson - is overshadowed. In fact all events that lie beyond Heather's control are overshadowed by Heather's memory-action and the verbalization of her "story." Heather learns that her story varies significantly from the "plot" of the "Romance of the North," full of adventure, love and happy endings. There is "no connection between that and her tired lonely existence as a Northern Nurse" (81).

As in Heather Rose, the tense of Simons' Preparing fluctuates, at times resting in the "presentational" ("When I was a kid..." 27; "I've never cared for establishments..." 37;

"One of the children hanged himself..." 37). Most common, however is the use of the "representational" ("My parents are taking me out for dinner..." 27; "I'm not an organized revolutionary..." 29; "I keep hearing noises..." 31). As in Heather Rose, memory is accepted so fully that each moment is as it was lived. The use of this kind of memory structure creates the sensation of "story in the creation." The spectator sees this woman as she invented herself each day. These recollections cannot be captured, understood and retold like history, for they are just being discovered, just being charted.

Collages and Photo Albums of Recollection

Janet Feindel experiments with collage as a method of structuring the fragments of women's memory. In A Particular Class of Women, the entire piece is loosely framed by Lil' s memory (133) of her days as a burlesque dancer and of her times as a stripper at the Cabaret Circus. Each character who speaks is a recollection mediated by Lil's memory. Once joined together, they form Lil's story.

In keeping with this established frame, Lil's own monologues mark out a distinctive pattern that is discernible in each of the intermediary monologues. As Lil is drawn into recollection, so are the other speakers. Lil's sentimental vision of a sisterhood of strippers is echoed in the speeches of Marky(19), Angel (37), Glynis (41), and Georgia Scott (41). Her enthusiasm for the profession is recreated in Petal Rose (26), Luv (28-9) and Pink Champagne (54). Even Lil's recollections of pain suffered at the hands of exploiting men are correspondingly matched in the recollections of the other women. Lil's final optimism and anticipation of the future matches up with Marky's dreams of a tattoo shop, Luv's passionate fantasies, Angel's desire to work with disturbed children, Glynis' career in geology, Georgia's will to fight back and Pink Champagne's dreams of the movies. A Particular Class of Women is a collage of memories all arranged in a pattern determined by Lil's vision.

> The Cabaret Circus. I loved that place. Even though it was a dump. Every time I would walk up those filthy smelly stairs, past those neon lights, I would get a buzz. I can still smell it; smoke, perfume, old come and... Macdonald's.... (17)

Lil could be construed as the "author" of a sex trade "history" who constructs, out of her "story," various sentimental "plots." However authority is undermined by the existence of dramatic irony. Despite Lil's confidence at the closure of the play, the reality is that this woman is still trying to reassure herself that she is attractive to men. Her worth continues to be determined by her sexual appeal. Her "plot" unconsciously tells a different "story".

> Do you realize that this is the first time at forty-two years old I see what my face looks like without make-up? Do you know how strange that feels? When you realize you are an older woman? It's not the fact that I'm older, it's the fact that for twenty-two years I had on so much make-up I didn't know what I looked like without it. The last time I really looked... I was a young girl...but I can still turn on an eighteen-year-old, no problem. I got what it takes! (59).

Dramatic irony is operative on all levels as each of the women's testimonies comes to sound more like defensive speeches to justify themselves than to justify their profession. Both Georgia's and Pink's monologues seem to suggest that too many years in the profession warps people's ability to see themselves accurately. Lil's memory exposes more than she realizes, a fact that renders the play ambiguous, perhaps more so than was Feindel's intention. Despite the attempt to make the play speak politically to the worth of the sex trade, it ultimately ends up questioning the profession. Georgia's drunken and off-hand comment may describe the Cabaret Circus with more accuracy:

> I'm putting a quarter in the jukebox now to remind myself of what I'm drinking to forget. So here I am back at the Cabaret Circus. 'Course, it's pure cunt, no show. (50)

An alternative framework for memory-action is explored in Jewel. The prologue of "valentines through the ages" establishes the pattern for the structure of the remainder of the play by composing a metaphoric photo album of memories of love and pain. The prologue-album attaches the concept of time to love, re-evoking the old cliché that time heals all wounds. The first image Marjorie looks at is of herself at age six, folding paper hearts for the boy she liked at school. The second recalls age thirteen, a dance and a special boy in cowboy boots. She is fifteen in the third photograph and at a sleepover. In the fourth she is twenty, at university and has a boyfriend. In the last picture it is six years later, she is married, and "still crazy with love." Marjorie holds this "album" in her hands for the remainder of the play.

One can look at the subsequent monologue as a sorting and rearranging of a shoe box full of photos yet to be stuck to pages. In one album Marjorie pastes the memories of Harry and her "stages" of grief. The album is called "Valentines 1982" and includes the ritual checking of the animals, a Valentine's day message from her husband over the radio, the arrival of the RCMP officer, the radio coverage of the tragedy, the wait for the recovery of the bodies and the image of her husband floating.

> And there you are, clear as ice for a single moment. In a little boat, wearing that awful parka from Sears. (139)

The monodrama concludes with the completion of this album as Marjorie removes her wedding ring and adds it to the other memories.

The process of mounting each memory into a "album" of recollection also allows for a simultaneous "remembering" of the future. While sorting through her recollections of Harry and her marriage, Marjorie encounters more recent memories that anticipate her future. In another album, entitled something like "tomorrow", Marjorie places recollections of walks with Wolf that were no longer clouded with fear (136). She pastes in moments of new passion and feelings of solitude and independence.

> I mean the world certainly does feel like a motel just in that everything looks so different. But you know Harry? Part of me

> likes that. It makes a walk with Wolf or just making dinner nearly miraculous....But I'll tell you something. I'm beginning to feel again and part of me just loves staying in a motel.(137-38)

Montage and Memory

In Moman, as in Heather Rose and Preparing, presentational memory is abandoned for the representational. The device is established in the first lines of the text where Moman explains she will be recreating a particular bus trip (42). However, inserted into this representational memory structure are other memories which reach deeper into Moman's past, Borrowing the techniques of montage from film, Dussault inserts flashbacks into Moman's memory of the bus trip. The result is a disruption of chronological and spatial continuity. The effect is a non-linear, multi-directional plot. It is important to note that the inserted texts are not controlled or mediated by the external narrative voice that keeps returning to the public, from the bus plot. They escape spontaneously, and with minimal preparation. For example, at the point where the "cord" flashback begins, the only set up is a parenthetical stage direction indicating a spatial change. Otherwise there is no explanation, no key to the transference from present to past (120). The flashbacks pertaining to Moman's childhood, adolescence, love affair, pregnancy and separation appear as if unavoidable or uncontrollable. This particular use of memory-action resembles the effects achieved by Heather Rose's descent into recollection. A kind of madness sets in and the distinction between what is present, recent past and distant past becomes nebulous.

Memory and sense

Memory-action is very much dependent upon the physical stimuli of smell, sound, vision and touch because of their link to the unconscious. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Luce Guilbeault's "Une actrice en folie." For the actress, all memory is mediated by the sensorial experience of the time recollected.

> Je respire l'odeur d'oignons qui vient de la grande cuisine verte.

> On m'embrasse.
> Je respire l'odeur de tabac de la joue chaude.
> Je reprends ma pomme maitenant fraîche.
> C'est bon, tout est bon.
> Et les plaisirs sont si vifs, si vifs. (53)

Sensual recollection can bridge gaps in time and space, creating structural non sequiturs out of plot. When Pol Pelletier's "Marcelle II" recalls the first time a woman touched her, her stream of consciousness is diverted 180 degrees. What began as a condemnation of women ends as a sensual tribute.

> Et puis, un jour, une femme a posé sa tête sur mon épaule.
> L'os de sa joue que je sens sur mon épaule.
> Sa main glisse, toute légère, le long de mon sein droit,
> pénètre à l'intérieur de ma chemise.
> Sa main sur mon sein gauche.
> Sa voix qui dit "C'est doux".
> Qu'est-ce qui se passe? Tout s'arrête. (68)

The monodrama changes direction. No longer dwelling on the hatred of the past, Marcelle imagines the sensual possibility of the future.

The Spinning Top

La Marquise of Savard's Bien à moi stipulates early on that she will not narrate the past as if it were a history existing prior to, and outside of, her text:

> Je ne vous parlerai pas de mon enfance, parce que je suis soulagée...l'oeil de plâtre. Et je ne vous dirai rien de ce qu'on raconte au sujet de mon mari...." (24)

Instead she tangles the past up, confusing the distant past with yesterday, tomorrow and the distant future. The play is structured in the form of letters that la Marquise has written to herself. The first one begins in the past, dated the 7th of April, 1969, and is qualified as yesterday (23). Yesterday, la Marquise realized that she had much to tell. She learned that her entire life's story had been silenced and remained comfortably untold. The next letter is dated the day before yesterday, the first of September of no specific year. This "historical document" tells of a boy, cared for, nurtured and "buttoned into" his body and soul by his mother. One day a handsome prince comes riding in on a white horse and seduces the child away from his mother with the lures of the public world. This letter looks at "history" and the marginalization of women in the domestic private world. The third letter is dated later in that same "historical" day. It moves ahead slightly and includes revisions of the earlier letter. Here, just a step ahead of history, la Marquise's story begins to emerge. She begins to reinterpret and elaborate on her past. She reminds herself of the role she has played in history and begins to perceive a need to write herself out of it.

> Et je pourrais même vous dire que j'ai très bien connu le petit garçon du beau prince. Lorsque j'invente un peu, c'est quand il s'agit de sa mère. Et si je le fais, croyez-moi toujours encore une fois, ce n'est pas par malhonnêteté, mais bien parce que le cher petit avait pris la bonne habitude de m'appeler maman. (31-32)

The letter erupts into song and retells the legend of the prince and his sleeping beauty. The use of rhyme and song (see Chapter One) serves first to centre and then deconstruct the myth by at once pointing out its structure and trivializing its content. The fourth letter, dated today, the 18th of January, again of no specific year, brings la Marquise into the present. Here, she sees she has been fabricated, constructed and moulded by patriarchal culture. She understands that she has been systematically erased.

> Et je me vois enfin dans toute la nudité de mon absence, si loin de moi que je suis. (39)

Her mirror comes to reflect her own image instead of that of the needs and desires of men (40). The fifth letter is dated merely another day holding no fixed spot in time. The letter is not a regression in la Marquise's progress, but a representation of the constant spinning over and revision of one's present position. It segues into a song in which la Marquise describes a madly spinning top. She identifies with the top. She feels she is a top that spins back over space covered before, back through memory. The final letter is dated in the future - tomorrow - but the tone is pessimistic. It begins with, "Alors là, ça va pas du tout" (51). La Marquise realizes that she is spinning backward toward where her mother was before her. Her entrapment in history appears endless.

> Allors là hein!
> A ouie-dit

> A l'arrière-pense
> A pour-parle
> pis a parle pus. (54)

However, the earlier reading of the January 18th letter saves the piece from pessimistic determinism. What is happening in the last two letters is the continuation of a spiral-like structure. La Marquise spins back, unwinding, un-doing the bondage that has tied her tongue for years. Then she spins ahead, this time weaving her story. She does spin back again and for a time lose the ground she regained, but she will return to develop more of her story with each memory-action.

Memory to write over History

La Marquise's monodrama is self-conscious of the fact that it writes against history and women's perpetual absence or misrepresentation. Jovette Marchessault pushes this interpretation of memory-action further by suggesting that the recuperation of female memory can serve to project women into a future (as it does in Jewel) designed and conceived by their imaginations. Louky Bersianik defines this kind of memory as "le mémoire du futur, de l'habileté à faire des plans, à se projeter en avant."[13]

Les vaches de nuit is not structured according to memory in the same way as Bien à moi or Jewel. In the introductory paragraphs, Marchessault makes it clear that her speaker is trying to disassociate herself from her past, which is one of oppression and mutilation.

> Depuis des siècles, il est universellement reconnu chez les machinateurs de l'Ordre-des-Castrants, qu'une vache castrée a un comportement plus uniforme, plus normatif qu'une vache qui ne l'est pas.... (83)

Instead the speaker launches her speech into an alternative space in which women's collective memory can be shared. Together all female animals attempt to recuperate a lost history.

> Les corneilles allument leurs pipes de maïs, tirent une bonne bouffée en s'ébouriffant des plumes et se mettent à raconter, à dire

> en long et en large, en superficie rayonnante tout ce dont elles se souviennent à propos de nous. (92)

The speaker recounts how each animal takes her turn to speak and to remember : "les plus maudites d'entre les maudites se relèvent peu à peu de l'imprécision et de l'inexistence" (94). Stories of ancient mothers, friendships, power and happiness surface out of the amnesia afflicted brains. Every night the crows tell the same story and every time it gets richer as more is remembered and added. A new future space is anticipated:

> ...c'est bien simple, dans le silence qui règne alors, on croirait entendre tomber la première goutte de lait sur la terre promise. Les corneilles nous rendent notre temps de femelles d'avant l'Ordre-des-Castrants. (92-93)

Together, their voices gain strength and the "time of the females" becomes more than a "minute of silence in their memories" (94).

Despite a mandate to imagine over patriarchal history in search of a collective and empowering story for females, the horrors of the past are inescapable and the speaker and her partners spiral back each night as a sinister and sombre light colours their festivities:

> Après le temps des mères, tout n'est qu'extermination, massacres, chantages, longues marches des femelles vers les abattoirs, les bûchers, les cimetières de l'anonymat, les chambres nuptiales de la torture. Tout n'est que des viols, tueries, mainmise des couteaux et de la vengeance sur la gorge de la misère. (93)

Night cows are forced to return to their daily duties as day cows where once again they are threatened by amnesia.

Nevertheless, the meeting of the night cows is a nightly ritual that occurs over and over again. The speaker speaks reassuringly in the present. What happened last night will happen tonight and tomorrow night as well. The sense of progression is again captured in the spiral image (or the image of the spinning top) as each step involves a returning to where you were before, only slightly ahead of the previous visit - a vantage point that allows for a re-examination of the past and an anticipation of the future.

> ...[J]e sais qu'on se rapproche du moment où cette terre promise nous sera rendue.... (94)

The future is as good as women can imagine it. Marchessault says that the female memory, erased by centuries of exploitation, is as expansive as the female imagination. Since women have been deprived of stories for so long, now is the time to re-invent them. Gail Scott says of her own autobiographical writing, "The little girl had to invent herself each day."[14]

Closure

The monodramas, as I have interpreted them, are open forms of dramatic expression. In accordance with Pfister's definition of open form, the monologues defy linear plot progression as scenes and sequences become arranged according to loosely defined patterns which oscillate between past and present and in some cases dare to invent the future.[15] To be closed in form, the drama must be based on a completely self-contained story in which there are no background events to influence the beginning, in which the ending is absolutely final and the presentation of which conforms to Aristotelean demands of unity and totality. Whether the dramatic canon contains even one truly "closed" play is a matter for question; however, it is worth while to note that women's texts write either against or outside of any predetermined, containable story (history, authority). Always qualifying women's writing is their past misrepresentation.

The degree of closure, nevertheless, varies from play to play. It would be a mistake to say that because their texts embrace a nonlinear memory structure that all plays by women completely resist closure. Diving, Preparing, Moman, A Particular Class of Woman or Jewel all illustrate some degree of closure by representing either the success or failure of the speaker to emancipate herself from some form of socio-cultural bondage. Pink, Florence-Geneviève-Martha, Heather Rose, and Bien à moi, however, leave the speakers still grappling with the issues that preoccupy them.

A closed ending is achieved when a piece comes to a point of full discovery and understanding. This is not possible for women who are just beginning to name. In its purest form a closed ending leaves no questions unresolved, no ambiguity and no room for discrepancy. Women write against the authority of history that has cast them as silent, subordinate and memory-less. There is still so much to uncover. The project is not complete. Memory still waits to be tapped. La nef des sorcières reiterates this. "La Menopausée" cries:

> Elle crève des millénaires d'arrière-pensées.
> Elle avoue des millénaires de vérités secrètes.
> Je suis UNE être humain,
> Je viens de donner 55 ans à l'histoire
> et je ne veux pas que ce soit inutile. (29)

"La Fille" realizes that the world must listen. History must be challenged.

> C't'un histoire d'amour qui a pas d'allure, qui tient pas d'boutte, c'est à r'bâtir d'un bout à l'autre, c'est pus vivable. Si on pouvait l'effacer just' d'un coup pis s'dire: bon ben O.K. les gars, les filles, on r'commence. (49)

"L'Ecrivain" decides that tonight she will deconstruct the history of the beauty and the beast, the victim, the hysteric and the witch and replace them with her memory. She will "tell herself" (73). She will write herself, without "lifting her skirt" (74), into history. "J'ai la mémoire longue cette nuit.... (76).

These women announce that their memory cannot be ignored. Its action is shaping their texts and their representations of themselves. Nicole Brossard believes that in becoming visible and exposed in public, each woman's private memory helps expand our field of vision.[16] It is only a matter of time before women write all over history and begin to re-shape the world they live in. Bersianik has defined this as offensive memory-action:

> Alors qu'il nous faudra imaginer une mémoire offensive ayant la force d'explosion et de projection d'une arme nucléaire capable de *briser les préjugés* millénaires qui sont de mature mâle mais qui se sont aussi solidifiés chez les femmes, une mémoire capable de remettre le monde au *degré zéro* de son écriture.[17]

The women's monologue attempts to undermine the existence of an objective "history" or pre-textual story by suggesting that history is, in actuality, the product of a subjective "plot". Moreover, it is argued that the woman's "plot" is not an authoritative structuring of the raw material of life but is subversively the creative engendering and discovery of that life itself. In such a vision, "story" imagines the possibility of a future that exits outside of the narrow perimeters of the old "patriarchal plot".

NOTES

[1] Manfred Pfister The Theory and Analysis of Drama, trans. John Halliday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 196.

[2] Pfister, 196-97.

[3] More common terms for "story" in this sense are "topic", "theme" or "subject matter." This is a question of semantics only. I am using the word "story" to encompass all historical, social and cultural knowledge that exists prior to the composition of text. In Pink, Thompson draws Lucy's story from the larger story (history, theme, topic, subject) of apartheid. This also applies to Inside Out, where I qualify the institution of motherhood as a "story" (history, theme, topic, subject) that pre-dates Pamela Boyd's text.

[4] France Théoret and Nicole Brossard, Preface, La nef des sorcières (Montréal: Quinze, 1976) 8.

[5] Pfister 199.

[6] Nicole Brossard, "Memory: Hologram of Desire," Tessera 13 (Fall 1988): 43.

[7] For more on this argument see Nathalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, Introduction, Representations, Special Issue on Memory, 26 (Spring 1989): 2-3.

[8] Brossard, "Memory," 44.

[9] Louky Bersianik, Les agénésies du vieux monde (Montreal: L'Intégrale, 1982) 5.

[10] Marlene Norbese Philip, She Tries her Tongue: Her Silence Softly Breaks (Charlottetown: Ragweed, 1989) 87.

[11] Bersianik 18.

[12] Erin Mouré, (WSW) West South West (Montreal: Véhicule Press,1989) 28.

[13] Bersianik 10.

[14] Gail Scott, "A Feminist at the Carnival, "Spaces Like Stairs (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1989) 130.

[15] Pfister 245.

[16] Brossard, "Memory" 46.

[17] Bersianik 14.

CHAPTER THREE

Re-Dressing the Difference:

The Female Body in the Performance of the Monodrama

Keir Elam, in his semiotic analysis of the theatrical process, argues that unlike the literary critic the theatre researcher is faced with two quite dissimilar - although intimately correlated - types of textual material: that which is produced in the theatre and that which is composed for the theatre.[1] He titles these the performance text and the dramatic text respectively. Chapters One and Two dealt exclusively with the latter of these two texts by focusing on the act of writing and the language and structure of monodrama. This chapter and those which follow will focus upon the solo performance text and how the medium of theatre presents a whole other range of physical signs to be interpreted by the spectator. Elam points out that existing alongside words in theatre are the bodies and voices of actors as well as the other theatrical elements of costumes, make-up, music, props, set and lights. Everything that makes an appearance on stage becomes a sign which, like a word, has a denotative and a connotative meaning. Ultimately, the theatre possesses a lexicon of visual, aural and tactile signs which have been given, over the centuries of history, conventional meanings. The performance text is essentially a rearrangement of this vocabulary. The theatre semiotician examines the performance text, deconstructing its signs for their cultural, social and ideological connotations.

The most obvious and debatably the most important of these signs in the one-woman show is the body of the performer herself. I concluded the second chapter by suggesting that the female voice as it emerges in the one-woman show is not only oral but corporeal. Very much connected to women's writing is the difference of their physical bodies, which to varying degrees is always informing the text in an attempt to make that which was object, subject. This tendency, reflected in the dramatic text, is paralleled in the performance text as the playwrights seek to deconstruct the ideology encoded in the physical presence of a woman's body on the stage. However, the issue of the theatrical representation of women's bodies has been as problematic for feminist critics and writers as the issue of language presented in the first chapter. As women have been misrepresented by language in literature, so they have been misrepresented by their own bodies on stage and on film. Sue Ellen Case argues that analyses of the performance texts of the dramatic canon illuminate how the image of woman on stage has participated directly in the dominant ideology of gender. [2] Case quotes feminist film theorist Teresa de Lauretis[3] to explain this critique:

> Overall, feminist semiotics concentrates on the notion of "woman as sign". From this perspective, a live woman standing on the stage is not a biological or natural reality, but a fictional construct, a distillate from diverse but congruent discourses dominant in Western cultures.[4]

Feminist film critics such as de Lauretis and Laura Mulvey argue that in the standard canon of artistic representation, the sign of the female body means the desire of men. In simplistic terms, women do not have an essential femaleness about them; rather, they are constructed so as to answer to what men want. The female body on stage is not a woman's body at all, but the reflection of the male desire that has built that body. Luce Irigaray explains that "just as a commodity has no mirror it can use to reflect itself, so woman serves as reflection, as image of and for man, but lacks specific qualities of her own. Her value-invested form amounts to what man inscribes in and on this matter: that is, her body."[5] Thus "woman" exists in a state of "looked-at-ness."[6] Jill Dolan, in her important work on the representation of women in theatre, says:

> Placing women in a representation always connotes an underlying ideology and presents a narrative driven by male desire that effectively denies women's subjectivity.[7]

It is my hypothesis that each of the one-woman plays being studied here demonstrates an awareness of the need to re-dress the female body as a semiotic sign. I would argue that these plays are questioning old meanings for the body and attempting to give her new status as subject.

It should be noted that many of the assumptions presented in this chapter are highly hypothetical. It is difficult to distil the performance text in the absence of the knowledge of what went on on stage. I am working from published copies of plays, most of which include very few stage directions. In many cases I have found myself having to rely on the scanty and frequently glib impressions of newspaper critics.

The Body and Role Playing

Theatrical performance in general depends on the deep human fascination with play, and specifically with role playing. In theatre, intensity and interest are generated through viewing and participating in the ritualized "dress-up" performance of socialized roles. The theatrically adorned body of the actor becomes a sign that signifies the images that we as a culture perpetuate. Theatre represents the kind of people we are and alternatively the kind of people that we would like to be. The interest in the one-woman play stems from its ability to provide a narrow focus upon the act of role-playing and its larger connotations for women. In the one-woman play, the female body is engaged in a double role-playing. An actor plays a character who in turn is engaged in various levels of social/gender role-playing. Actors, playing roles on stage, portray women playing roles in society. There is an irresistible metatheatricality present in the monodrama that is at once theatre (role-playing), a deconstruction of theatre (deconstruction of roles played) and a contextualization of theatre in the world that it is ultimately attempting to re-present.

Un-dressing the Roles

What is defined as a cycle in Diving and a ritual in Preparing are critiques of the socialized roles created for and imposed upon women by their society. In both cases all physical stage movement is devoted to the disguising and distorting of the female body. In Hollingsworth's play, Viveca's body is described as thin and "almost scrawny" (115). It is visually evident that Viveca is not physically strong. Stage directions indicate that the actor who plays Viveca must assist in the creation of this effect by covering her body in a towel which she is careful not to let drop. When the towel does fall her body is exposed clad in an "absurd bathing suit decorated with maple leaves" (115). The actor must play shy embarrassment, suggesting that Viveca is uncomfortable with her "Canadian" self. Before she prepares to dive, she arranges her clogs, her towel, the earplug box and her bag with care and precision. The physical use of her body connotes nervousness and fear. An awkward smile and tentative steps toward the diving platform (115) make it clear that Viveca would prefer to opt out of this situation. She even removes herself as much as possible by using earplugs (115). The image of Viveca's body participates in a life cycle that it cannot overcome. Her contorted, shivering figure contrasts with the soaring eagle she imagines. She more closely resembles the salmon she describes as swimming in a predetermined cycle of self-sacrifice (117). The visual image is completed when, following her dive, Viveca's body is replaced by a salmon skeleton. The actor returns only to show Viveca beginning again. She no longer wears leaves. The Canadian motif is fully incorporated into a new "jaunty swim suit" that the actor indicates Viveca wears with pride (the towel now cast over her shoulder, 118). Viveca no longer demonstrates the same reservation toward the water and casually goes about her preparations. She has been told she must participate in the Canadian life cycle. She must join the team, don the uniform and dive, thereby playing the role of Canadian. Though her body resists conforming, the coercive forces of integration eventually take over and Viveca becomes a beaming "role model". Because West Coast anxiety has been replaced by national pride, the actor's body comes to represent the image Viveca conjures up of the obedient dog fetching sticks to please his master (116).

Beverley Simons' plays always reflect an interest in women's roles in the performance of human rituals. Preparing follows a woman through seven periods of her life. There are no blackouts between the segments and Simons insists that the actor take the time to effect the transitions (26). As the character Jeannie matures, the actor physically effects changes upon her body through the use of costume, make-up and hair accessories. The costume designed for the actor is flexible enough to appear as a school girl uniform in the first scene and subsequently as an erotic dress, a bridal gown, a hospital robe, a dress and shawl, and finally a winding sheet. With each layer of make-up, carefully applied to mask the signs of aging, Jeannie appears older, and her face takes on the "quality of a mask" (32). Similarly the actor changes her hair to suit the age and moment she is recreating. The audience sees the "preparation" that goes into the creation of role model. As Jeannie transforms her body into the image of young lady, bride, wife, mother, career woman and finally corpse, the spectator sees how the activity becomes ritualized and incorporated. The body is shaped and sculpted to the demands and criteria of society.

Female bodies are removed from the sight of the audience in Diving and Preparing. Bound and gagged, women serve as the passive handmaidens of their culture (Canadian, patriarchal). The desires and feelings of their bodies remain virtually invisible, while focus is on the externally applied dress and image. Interest lies in what is done to the body as opposed to its natural essence. Nowhere is this made more clear than in Diving where Viveca's integration is seen as a direct result of the influence exerted upon her by the disembodied "male voice." It is ironic that although titled with active verbs, Diving and Preparing represent women's bodies in objectified and inactive roles.

Both of these pieces differ, however, from misogynist representation of women in their critique of the use of the female body as object. When the actor playing Viveca goes to dive for the second time, the sense of artificiality in the "routine" is so enhanced by the pop music and repetitious tape-recorded voice (118) that it becomes satirical or ironic. Hollingsworth appropriates all of the connotations of the female body (weakness, passivity, subordination) and subverts them by highlighting them. In so doing, she makes it clear that these connotations are not biologically inherent characteristics of the female body. They are externally applied qualities that function in the service of an ideology that lies beyond, and in a sense controls the body. The woman who performs, therefore, is not merely a passive object, but an active participant in the process of re-dressing representation. Similarly, through the use of heightened theatricality, Jeannie's need to prepare is likened to the preparation of an actor for a role. Jeannie says, "How shall I make myself appear? What role shall I play?" (33). Conscious metatheatricality makes it clear that Jeannie presents the "play" of patriarchy and its system of commodifying and exchanging women. Jeannie is evidently an actor that walks through the script of a great play written by men. When a performer undertakes the representation of Jeannie, she participates in the deconstruction of this kind of play.

Wendy Lill also breaks representation down to role-playing, but her theatrical devices are not so obviously associated with the body of the performer as the costumes and props of Hollingsworth's and Simons' plays. Stuck on a bulletin board, when Heather enters the playing space, are the promotional posters for the Northern Medical Services, Indian Affairs, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Northern Affairs, etc. (67). These images of food groups and smiling children serve as a constant reminder of the altruistic role of the nurse in the development of the Canadian North. The stage directions indicate that Heather is to undercut this role through the transformation of the tableau of posters. She produces a selection of Northern souvenirs which she tacks up on the board, next to the posters. Amongst her artifacts are a sketch that Nurse Bunny did of a broken snowshoe, pages of Nurse Bunny's diary, file cards with meal plans on them, her own sketches of ravens, and a plastic bag which serves to demonstrate how gasoline is inhaled. Next to the bulletin board, on the black board, are the words Heather has written in an attempt to reconcile her experience with language (see Chapter One). All of these images (the pretty posters, the shocking artifacts and the words) relate to the body of the performer. Qualified by all that surrounds her, the actor's body comes to represent the space where colonial ideology, romantic expectation and the dismal realities of a Northern community meet and clash. The incompatibility of the images suggest the fracturing effects of the Northern experience upon Heather's perception of herself. The play concludes with Heather standing amidst these signs that reflect her image in various kinds of mirrors. She is presented in the process of trying to distinguish role-playing from reality.

Inside Out makes further use of props in order to deconstruct female roles and representations. Pamela Boyd introduces a puppet into what is otherwise realistic theatre in order to dramatize how women's representations are constantly qualified by their roles as mother or wife. Boyd specifies that no attempt is to be made to disguise the artificiality of the puppet.

> Arran is 18 months, and is a life-sized, stuffed, caricature puppet.
> All Arran's movements are obviously done by Ellen. (97)

Boyd insists that the puppet be equipped with devices allowing it to function physically as an appendage to Ellen's body. The puppet has a metal ring at the back of his neck so that he can hook onto his mother's waist. There is velcro on his hands so that he can grasp onto his mother's leg. With a symbolic child attached to her body, the performer is physically linked to the maternity that is the root of Ellen's frustration. The puppet serves to qualify the representation by physically indicating that this body is a sign that means motherhood.

Temporary release from the child's grasp sends Ellen into a frenzy of make-beleive. As an actress, she simply does what she knows best and turns her life into a play. She makes it clear that she is being expected to play too many roles at once. Apart from motherhood, being a woman also entails the responsibilities of career woman, cook, hostess, daughter and wife. The result of this strained focus is madness. She imagines and physically acts out all she is "supposed" to represent:

> I had a little wife, the prettiest ever seen,
> She washed up the dishes and kept the house clean.
> She went to the mill to fetch me some flour,
> And always got home in less than an hour. (130)

Ellen also explains just how she has fallen short. She fetches her family portrait and points out how she physically fails to adhere to society's definition of an attractive woman. She brings out her typewriter and apologizes her deficiencies as a writer. She apologizes for her meal, covers her salad with liquid detergent, crams it all into the mouths of imaginary guests and then angrily clears the table. Ellen's mixture of fantasy and role-playing takes a final leap into the macabre when she hears her baby crying and imagines suffocating him with a pillow (135), as if trying to rid herself of his velcro grip. Though the piece ends with Ellen's retrieval of her son, the physical reaffirmation of maternal affection (136) is not permitted before the role of mother has been thoroughly qualified.

The actress who undertakes Viveca, Jeannie, Heather or Ellen engages in role-playing about role-playing. Thus, she is in an empowered position. Her role is different from the weak heroine or the devious seducer. Her body, though covered in silly maple leaves, make-up, wigs or flanked by a large stuffed puppet, does not come to connote weakness and subservience. She controls the significance of her body by allowing it to work at the deconstruction of women's roles. The irony in the conscious theatricality of all four plays subverts the representations and makes them self-critical.

An extended example of this dynamic is found in La nef des sorcières. In performance Luce Guilbeault played an actress ("L'Actrice") who plays Agnès in Molière's L'Ecole des femmes. Agnès, dressed in a white period costume, parasol in hand, is a physical sign of feminine silence and passivity.[8] However, "L'Actrice" denies this passivity by actively refusing to perform the role. Instead of allowing her body to represent subordinance, she manipulates it to signify defiance. Therefore, Guilbeault engaged her body in the task of simultaneously representing and deconstructing gender role-playing. Yvonne Mathews-Klein and Ann Pearson observed:

> Guilbeault establishes the distance between the kind of drama we are witnessing, experiencing and that which represents the traditional theatre of male ideology - theatre which at once idolizes and debauches female characters, by denying them the reality of female experience and transforming them into actors on the stage of a male fantasy. Simultaneously, we in the audience are alerted that we are permitted to, even required to view the actors on stage in a new way - not merely as interpreters of the author's vision, but as participants in the act of creation itself.[9]

Refusing the Roles

The representation of Ellen breaks down the image of the mother into the multiple roles that ultimately constitute her in society's eyes. Ellen's final breakdown suggests that the demands of child rearing and homemaking are often great burdens undertaken thanklessly by women at the expense of their own careers and sense of self. Dussault's Moman extends this representation to include a rejection of all the pressures that drive Ellen crazy.

In the dramatic text of Moman, the secondary characters are reflections of the pressures that Moman feels are operative against her as a woman and mother (see Chapter One). Each character projects a particular attitude to Moman that encases her finally in her maternity or alternatively her femininity (for example, the bus driver who is quick to make a point of Moman's single parenthood [62]; the old woman who immediately assumes that

Moman uses her children to personal advantage [63]; the young girl who simplistically suggests that it is not at all easy to raise children [74]; Moman's family who relies on her for nurturing support [81]; or the helpful gentleman who wastes no time asking Moman for her telephone number [154]). In performance then, the female actor's body physically becomes all of the individual attitudes that constitute the main character's public image. For this reason, Moman, of all the pieces studied here, presents the greatest physical challenge to an actor. The production photographs, included in the published text, indicate that the physical activity of this play surpasses all of the others studied here. I find it virtually impossible to imagine the frantic quality of a performance text in which a single actor takes on up to fifteen roles - simultaneously. When an actor attempts to play so many people at once, the result is a farcical, schizophrenic performance in which the represented body is fragmented by the constant shifting between different roles. Ellen's madness is represented differently as each social pressure manifests itself in a different physical and vocal configuration of the actor's body (i.e when she becomes the hippie or the sales clerk, or her mother). This fragmented body comes to stand for the bodies of women as they are shaped and molded to suit the various tastes and needs of society. This device becomes particularly interesting for the feminist critic when Dussault's body represents a male (i.e. the bus driver, her father, the hippie or the helpful gentleman). Literally and physically, the female body comes to represent the male desires that construct her. The representation is an actual breaking down and re-presentation of the patriarchal demands made of women's bodies. It amounts to a loud and powerful challenge to a system that allocates roles based upon an assumed gender inequality, and it criticizes representation that supports this system in any way. When Moman refuses to continue to play "la mère police" (138) she is essentially insisting that women will no longer be subjected to the fractured and destructive existence that Ellen or Heather suffer and dramatize.

The monologues of Jeanne-Mance Delisle present another refusal to subjugate the female body to patriarchal roles. In the first piece Florence is writing a letter. She is engaged in an effort to represent herself and her body in such a way as to arouse her correspondent's desire. The physical implication of her inability to keep pen to page is that writing is about as difficult for Florence as the dive is for Viveca (152). However, unlike Viveca who eventually performs the task at hand, Florence physically denies it and pushes over her pile of paper and letters (155). The represented body becomes livid with rage, actively refusing to denote subservience.

The stage directions implicit in Geneviève's lines indicate how the actor is to make her body appear to the spectator. "J'ai l'cou tout raide à force de faire attention pour pas m'dépeigner!" (159). However, from the very beginning it is made evident that this prim position is not natural to Geneviève who longs to run her fingers through her perfect coiffure. As the text moves forward, Delisle makes it clear that the actor's use of her body must reflect Geneviève's bridled sensuality. Parenthetical stage directions indicating that the lines are to be delivered "sensuellement" (162) seem to be movement cues. As Geneviève begins to recall past moments of extreme desire (162), the actor's physical movements develop correspondingly. It is implicit that the pristine, coifed doll must move with sensuality vibrating through her body. Returning to her present condition, Geneviève recognizes the deplorable neglect of her physical desire. The constant preening of her body for her husband's delight has sentenced her to a frigid existence. She realizes that if she does not repossess her desire this condition will endure.

In the fi[illegible] representation, "Martha", the only stage directions are laughter notes and instructions [illegible]gh or to lean back. Though no specific movement is required by the text, it is physicalized. As in "Geneviève", a certain sensuality is implied but not specifically laid out in stage directions. Martha's awareness of her body's sexuality is unabashed. She describes herself as someone with "un air qui trompe pas" (169) and her recollections indicate a passion for the erotic (see Chapter Two). Furthermore, Martha harshly criticizes women who cover up or distort their bodies in order to present perfect packages (173-74). The actor's use of her body must therefore be unguarded and outwardly sensual.

Re-Dressing the Difference

Irigaray says that the division of sexual roles "requires that woman maintain in her own body the material substratum of the object of desire, but she herself, however, does not have access to that desire. The economy of desire - of exchange - is man's business." [10] Related to the refusal to play parts in the play of patriarchy is the need to re-possess the female body and its desires from the objectifying male gaze. Delisle's monologues move in this direction by working at physically uncovering the female sensuality that lies beneath the layers of social role playing.

However, many contentious arguments rise to the surface when representation begins to address the re-presentation of the female body as a sensual and desirous being. The line between a pro-feminist essentialist analysis of female desire and a representation that repositions the female body as object is often very fine.

A Particular Class of Woman attempts to achieve a representation that consciously transfers the power to attach meaning to women's bodies from the hands of men to women. Its concern lies not with the deconstruction of roles but with the re-presentation of female desire and of women as empowered subjects. Yet Feindel has chosen to represent workers in the sex trade industry, which has frequently come under question because it relies on the premise that women are objects to be gazed upon. Feindel argues that her characters are subjects actively engaged in their lives, not objects participating in a ritual of representation that confines them to others' expectations:

> In a society that is contemptuous of women's sexuality, stripping can explore the feminine clown, the sexual discourse and gestural language of women.[11]

Feindel opens her play with Lil baking cookies, an activity that one never associates with strippers. This is a disruptive tactic which immediately begins to thwart all stereotypes. However, Lil soon takes off her apron and dons a sparkly jacket and leotard. She mounts a table to begin performing a table dance as the character Marky. The form of dance is provocative and unquestionably appealing to the male gaze. Feindel defends herself by indicating that the performer must be careful to distinguish public from private use of the body:

> In my play...the spectators can observe the contrasting posture of the woman in the dressing room, like Georgia whose body is relaxed and casual while she gets ready to go "on stage;" in her stance on stage her body has a presentational quality, presenting a sexy image of the "strip." There is a certain fluidity between the sexual "talk" of the dressing room and the sexual dance on stage. When one is paid to have one's body viewed, the public display of the body forces the stripper to gain unusual clarity about her bodily boundaries. This is an act of self-determination which results in strippers usually having a clear sense of their own sexuality.[12]

However, Feindel's defence becomes more difficult to reconcile with her performance text as she continues to represent women in roles where they are disempowered by the male gaze. Marky finishes her routine and retires to the dressing room where she transforms into Petal Rose who is preparing herself for the stage. She is presented as getting ready to impress. First she puts up her hair, then she warms up her body at the ballet barre, and dons a Spanish dress, finishing off the outfit with lacy gloves. Despite Petal Rose's attitude of professionalism (24), it is difficult to distinguish this representation from Jeannie (Preparing), who similarly prepares for performance. When Petal Rose begins her "stocking act" on the stage, the spectator is supposed to understand her strength and power. However, it is difficult to accept this power without questioning the male desire that power is derived from. Subsequent representations find the performer in "a sexy madonna-style bra"(27) and performing floor shows. Even Angel, who addresses the audience from a seated position on the dressing room couch (her stance is comfortable and does not indicate a state of looked-at-ness), twists a penis-shaped balloon into an animal toy. She is unable to get away from the idea that the stripper's power comes from the manipulation of male desire. Georgia is the only character who actually removes her clothing, exposing her naked body to the spectators.[13] She enters the dressing room area of the stage and begins to undress. She reveals her pubic hair, cut in the shape of a heart. It is important to note that Georgia is undressing in the company of other women in the dressing room. She is not stripping, rather she is demonstrating a comfort with her own body and an ability to speak about it with ease and pride (see Chapter One). She feels that she controls her body. Nevertheless, the reality remains that she will undress for the strip bar client and they will think of her as "goods". Her body, as she has groomed it, is a product for consumption designed to appeal to male desire. Furthermore, Feindel has Georgia pouring herself drink after drink, thereby throwing her "control" into question. Pink also tries to project a strong image of sexuality and power as she stands asserting her status as an artist and star (57). Yet she fools no one; the reality is all too evident. She is a stripper in a sleazy bar, and when she takes off her clothes for money, she loses the ability to determine the meaning of her body. Her finale, à la Liza Minelli, is easily the most pathetic moment of the play. Her body, garbed in a sequined cape and blond wig, reflects her skewed perception of her present condition in the distorting light of her American dreams.

Despite Feindel's emphasis on the empowerment of women through stripping, it is difficult to overlook the reality that they achieve their independence by selling their bodies. Finding status for these women as subjects in control of their lives is challenging when their power is the power of commodities, valued only on a market scale according to physical properties. This fact is all too apparent to Lil, who comes face to face with the truth that her aging body is worthless. Similarly, Glynis is physically striking for what she is not. She does not sport a glamorous or slinky costume; she wears a skirt, sweater and beret. Her stage activity includes hanging up costumes and sewing. She is represented as the one who got out, and despite the abuses she still suffers her situation is presented as more desirable.

Furthermore, it is clear that these women acquire value though competition with each other. Many of the pieces contain comments on the comparative value of another woman's body. Petal Rose thinks Marky's display of her body is disgusting (22). Lil thinks Luv should cover up (31). Georgia thinks Pink Champagne smells bad (45). Pink Champagne thinks she is the most beautiful (54). Ironically, Feindel's play fits right into Irigaray's critique of the commodification and exchange of women:

> Woman thus has value only in that she can be exchanged. In the passage from one to the other, something else finally exists beside the possible utility of the "coarseness" of her body. But this value is not found, is not recaptured, in her. It is only her measurements against a third term that remains external to her, and that makes it possible to compare her with another woman....[14]

These women are strong. They possess a strength of character that is both enviable and admirable. However, Feindel places her characters (and the body of the woman who performs them) in a representation that can only perpetuate the ideology that women's bodies are to be valued against each other and eventually bought and consumed.

The analysis of similar representational problems has prompted Dolan to suggest that "power, sexuality and desire can be recuperated from the strictly male domain, and can assume distinctly different meanings placed in a different sexual and gender context."[15]

She contends that the direct challenge of the heterosexuality of the body on stage could disrupt the spectacle with the possibility of new, radical representations .[16]

An appeal to lesbian and auto-erotic desires attempts to re-dress the female body in La nef des sorcières. In Pol Pelletier's transition from "Marcelle I" to "Marcelle II" (Pelletier played both roles), glass was broken to signify the change. At the moment of transition, Pelletier snatched off the wig she had been wearing as Marcelle I and revealed her shaved scalp. As Marcelle II, she staunchly refused to participate in the mock ritual of preparation and instead subverted it by sporting a look that was daringly "unfeminine".[17] As a sign in a performance, Pelletier did not signify male desire. This kind of repossessing of the body was also found in the same production of "La Fille". According to critics Klein and Pearson, Louisette Dussault (playing "La fille") made the gesture of stripping off all of her clothes and confronting her human imperfections unashamedly.[18] Furthermore, Michèle Magny, as "l'Ecrivain", made physical, and therefore explicit, the implicit connection between the act of giving birth and the sensual discovery of self. In performance, the writer's struggle to give birth to a text climaxes with Magny miming the birth of a girl child.[19] Physical and literal connections are drawn between the two forms of creativity.

The La nef pieces attempt to invert the phallocentric economy by shifting the emphasis away from the maintenance of the female body as an object of male desire (i.e. Preparing or A Particular Class). The aesthetic cultivated in the representation of the female body corresponds, not to what makes a woman desirable to a man, but to what makes her desirable to herself or to others like her. As Dolan suggests, desire "can be exchanged with a much different meaning between women." [20] In these re-dressed representations, the emphasis falls on discovery and not exploitation. The bodies of the performers become signs signifying the existence of a female sexuality previously considered a "fixed, male-owned commodity."[21]

The cultural feminist jumps at these possibilities, hoping to explore female sexual potential. The use of the nude female body in cultural feminist performance art reflects the movement's "concern with attitudes toward women's bodies."

> Nudity in performance also paralleled the impetus in women's fiction and poetry to provide a forum for women's newly heard voices, by attempting to symbolically reclaim women's subjectivity through the body. The body art concept also stemmed from the cultural feminist impulse to expose women's innate differences from men, and to signify a departure from the more violent tradition of male performance art that precedes the feminist work.[22]

Marie Savard has developed a character who is actively discovering her own body on stage in the act of masturbation. The auto-erotic in Bien à moi is intended to signify the ultimate act of repossessing the body. I have found it difficult to discern precisely what the initial performance of Bien à moi looked like. It is clear from the implied stage directions that la Marquise is either writing or reading letters and that she is drinking. Portions of the text clearly suggest that la Marquise is in the process of physically arousing herself (39-41); however, the extent to which the performer's body is exposed is left unrevealed. The reviewers make no mention of nudity on the stage or for that matter any comment on Dyne Mousso's use of her body. Nevertheless what is implied is that only through touching herself can la Marquise come to know herself (40). For this reason, a corporeal physicality on the part of the performer is required. Director André Brassard recognized some of the difficulties inherent in his (male) control over a representation of a women engaged in auto-eroticism and he stepped aside, allowing Mousso and Savard to determine the representation themselves. Savard found Brassard's willingness to allow the two women to work on this particular part alone to be touching, "parce qu'à ce moment là, la Marquise devenait vraiment maîtresse d'elle-même."[23] The representation was theoretically free from the restrictions of traditional theatre in which women's bodies become the object of men's desire instead of the subject of their own. Savard has attempted to deny the privileged male gaze, constructing instead a body that is a full subject, engaged in her own eroticism.

The argument that values Bien à moi or La nef des sorcières as more "woman-centred" because of their auto-erotic/ homo-erotic representations of the female body is not flawless. Despite her advocacy for the re-dressing of female desire, Dolan cautions that the female body is always ideologically marked, always connoting gender, always carrying the meanings inscribed by the dominant culture.[24] "Women always bear the mark of their sex which inscribes them within a cultural hierarchy."[25] This cautionary advice makes it possible to wonder if the distinction between A Particular Class of Women and Bien à moi is purely intellectual. Would the argument fall apart if tested in a theatre laboratory? What happens when the masturbating Marquise is represented before an audience of both sexes? If Dolan is correct (and the recent body of post-structuralist, post-modern, semiotic and reader-response theory seems to indicate that she is), then neither the performer nor the playwright exerts full control over the meaning of a representation. Intricately involved in the process of determining meaning is the spectator who receives theatrical signs and interprets them based on a body of cultural knowledge. It would be possible at this point to undermine virtually all of the conclusions asserted by this chapter by insisting that in a performance situation the actor ultimately does not have final control over the meaning of her body. However, as spectator-performance relations are the subject of the final chapter, I will leave this subject temporarily to look at Pink , Jewel and Les vaches de nuit. They help illustrate how, within the conventions of the monodrama, both playwright and performer can shape the presentation of a sign to give it meaning outside of that which is imposed by the dominant culture.

The figure of a white child connotes both innocence and purity. However, in the performance text of Pink, Thompson undercuts the cultural meanings hypothetically imposed upon such a figure by suggesting that Lucy be performed by an adult. In the first performance of the play, Claire Coulter's adult body contradicted the dramatic text. Childhood innocence appeared as full-grown ideology and authority. The performance text further undercuts the significance of the child-sign by requiring the stage presence of a coffin supposedly containing Nellie's body. Nellie lies still and invisible while Lucy speaks and moves. Lucy comes to represent privilege while Nellie signifies disadvantage and victimization. When juxtaposed with Nellie's coffin, the innocence of Lucy's body is tainted with the responsibility for Nellie's death. Ultimately, Lucy as a sign connotes racism, guilt and responsibility.

Semiotic inversion in Pink illustrates, to some degree, the playwright's ability to control and shape the meaning of a sign (like the physical body of a woman) outside of the meaning determined and imposed by culture. The inversion results from an abandonment of traditional realistic representation in favour of devices that self-consciously demand a reconsideration of meaning. Dolan describes realism as "prescriptive in that it reifies the dominant culture's inscription of traditional power relationships between genders and classes."[26] She suggests that in order for women to overcome the meanings that have been culturally imposed upon their bodies, they must disrupt the narrative and spectacle of realism.

What allows the monodrama to entertain new definitions for the female body (and ultimately distinguishes plays like Bien à moi from essentialist exploitations of the female body) is its implicit abandonment of realistic convention. Writing is a solitary act but speaking is not. Realistically, individuals do not speak aloud for extended periods of time when they are alone. The anti-realism of the monodrama allows for the introduction of a whole new series of signs and meanings that exist outside of the vocabulary familiarized by realistic representation.

Robert Crew, reviewing Joan MacLeod's performance in Jewel, remarked that the production lacked colour and dynamism, resembling a poetry reading rather than "true and vibrant drama."[27] However, perhaps what Crew missed was that in choosing to present her speaker talking alone MacLeod was abandoning the conventions of realism. On the one hand MacLeod's play is pared-down theatre. The sparseness of the stage directions implies that, with the exception of the specific instances where movement is required (skimming and pouring of milk and dancing to the radio), Marjorie is to remain still. There are limited props, simple costumes and virtually no physical action at all. On the other hand there is a great amount of talk. Marjorie talks to the dead, to her dog, and for the most part to herself. Though the action does not embrace an anti-realism characteristic of Brechtian or absurdist drama, it toys with a rejection of full realism ("true and vibrant drama") by suggesting that a balanced individual would sit still and speak aloud for so long when alone. The effect is a closing in around a woman engaged in herself and her needs. Marjorie speaks alone and there is no space allowed for any desire but hers.

The cow, a term frequently used to qualify an "ugly" woman, becomes the symbolic representation of the female body in Marchessault's Les vaches de nuit. This choice at once rejects the conventions of realistic representation and challenges the cultural meanings that have been attached to women's bodies. By choosing an image that has been cultivated as the antithesis of ideal femininity, Marchessault is able to get away from the baggage that plagues Feindel and, to a lesser extent, Savard. By not including a single stage direction in her work, Marchessault leaves the physicalization of the text up to the performer. Without a doubt, Pol Pelletier is one of the superior performers in theatre today and her contributions to Marchessault's text are not to be underestimated. Pelletier did the piece wearing a neutral leotard and supporting a huge horned mask upon her head which served to intensify the anti-realism already projected by her solitary speech and her cow-like stance. Furthermore, as indicated by performance photographs and a film clip produced by the NFB, Pelletier's movements were symbolic, intensely physical and open to the unexplored connotations of female eroticism.[28] Far away from the rigid qualities of realistic representation, Pelletier was able to explore women's bodies unashamedly. Because the theatrical sign of woman is re-dressed in a female aesthetic signifying female desire, the body is liberated and able to move without continuing to reflect the images of men.

By thwarting traditional forms of theatre and audaciously introducing a different kind of female aesthetic the woman playwright/performer team re-dresses the female body. Outside of the conventions of prescriptive realism, that posit the female body as the object of the male gaze, is a field of possibility. Sue Ellen Case imagines the theatre as a laboratory in which the "most effective mode of repression - gender - can be dismantled and removed." She foresees the same laboratory producing representations of subjects who are "liberated from the repressions of the past and capable of signalling a new age for both men and women."[29] In such a space theatrical signs would no longer reflect "reality" unconditionally. Realism is exposed as the handmaiden of authority and ideology, and it is dismantled and replaced with new theatrical signs that are able to imagine and construct new images. In each of these monodramas the exposure of the (private) female body "playing solitaire" becomes a political act, for it anticipates a new world where roles and representations are limited only by imaginations. Jane Moss speaks of the importance of the "spectacularization" of the female body in women's plays.

> By shining the spotlight on the female body, women's theatre invites actresses and female spectators to talk about, write about and act out the essence of their being, their female sexuality. Denouncing repression, negation, fragmentation and reification, the new body language refuses passivity and encourages

> psychosexual liberation through the discourse of the female body.[30]

While the female subject is still the problem," says critic Susan Bennett, " she is no longer the problem as object." [31] Each play, whether it deconstructs or re-presents, is engaged in the construction of an empowered female subject, whose body stands in opposition to traditional role-playing.

> Entrez. C'est la victime qui parle. L'hystérique qui se démène.
> Qui se tord dans son feu de sorcière. L'héritière de la dérision.
> Le corps étranger qui expie sa différence publiquement.
> ("L'Ecrvain", 77)

NOTES

[1] Keir Elam, The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama (London and New York : Methuen, 1980) 3.

[2] This argument is drawn from Lacanian/Freudian psychoanalysis. At birth the male child identifies sensually with all of his body. Patriarchal culture imposes upon the child the notion of limited erotic zones (le "non" du père). Once aligned with cultural laws the child perceives that there is something outside itself that is like itself - a unity of identity, a self (le "nom" du père). At this point the child trades his libidinal pleasure for the need to be a self (which is a cultural idea). This organization into selfhood drives him into the symbolic order of culture. The result is that in the world of symbols the self is always marked by an alienation from desire. Art is a product of that alienated desire. By definition then art excludes women from being producers; instead they become fixed in the position of the object of the gaze, rather than the subject of it. "Women appear in order to be looked at rather than to do the looking," [Sue Ellen Case, Feminism and Theatre (London: Macmillan, 1988)119-20].

[3] Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics and Cinema (Bloomingtom: Indiana University Press, 1984).

[4] Case 118.

[5] Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1977) 187.

[6] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen 16.3 (1975): 62.

[7] Jill Dolan, The Feminist Spectator as Critic (Ann Arbour: UMI Press, 1988) 57.

[8] To Molière's credit, L'Ecole des Femmes suggests that Agnès is frivolous less by nature than by her husband's design. The play can be interpreted as "pro-feminist" in its attack on the folly of trying to keep a wife as the simple instrument of a man's desire. Given a French audience's familiarity with Molière it is possible that Guilbeault is playing with an already existing understanding of Agnès' victimization. However, I tend to favour an interpretation that sees "l'Actrice" as adamently rejecting Molière's representation of women as passive and subordinate, despite its "humanist" agenda.

[9] Yvonne Mathews-Klein and Ann Pearson, "A Stage of Seven Women," rev. of La nef des sorcières by Nicole Brossard et al, Théâtre du nouveau monde, Montréal Branching Out 3 (Sept-Oct, 1974):17-19.

[10] Irigaray 188.

[11] Janet Feindel, "Developing a Particular Class of Women," Canadian Theatre Review, 59 (Summer 1989): 40.

[12] Feindel 40.

[13] The dynamics of this particular act in terms of the position of the spectator will be considered in subsequent chapters.

[14] Irigaray 176.

[15] Dolan 81.

[16] Dolan 63.

[17] Mathews-Klein and Pearson 19.

[18] Mathews-Klein and Pearson 19.

[19] Mathews-Klein and Pearson 19.

[20] Dolan 80

[21] Dolan 80.

[22] Dolan 62.

[23] Marie Savard, preface, Bien à moi (Montreal: Editions de la pleine lune, 1979) 11.

[24] Dolan 64.

[25] Dolan 63.

[26] Dolan 84.

[27] Robert Crew, "Gem of a Jewel Needs Strong Actress," rev. of Jewel, by Joan MacLeod, Tarragon Theatre, Toronto Toronto Star 28 April 1987: G3.

[28] "Les Terribles Vivants," prod. National Film Board of Canada. 1980.

[29] Case 132.

[30] Jane Moss, "The Body as Spectacle: Women's Theatre in Quebec," Women and Performance 3 (1986):15.

[31] Susan Bennett, "The Politics of the Gaze: Challenges in Canadian Women's Theatre," Canadian Theatre Review 59 (Summer 1989):13.

CHAPTER FOUR
Other Worlds:
Private and Public Space in the Monodrama

In the First Chapter, I introduced the female wilderness as the basis of both the content and context of the one-woman play. Functioning alongside the dramatic text in the naming of this "no man's land" is the performance text that is engaged in the physical representation of this exclusively feminine space.

"Space" in theatre has multiple meanings which immediately need to be recognized. Theatrical space is the physical structure that houses the audience and the play (i.e. the theatre, the stage and all its technical accoutrements). Alternatively, it is the fictional space created on stage using the devices of theatre (the location or setting of the play). It is also the space represented by the theatrical event, or the space outside of the theatre that corresponds to, or is challenged by, the fictional space. Austin Quigley, in his book on theatrical space, The Modern Stage and Other Worlds, notes that theatre is constantly drawing attention to the horizons or the boundary lines that exist between the on-stage space and the off-stage space, between auditorium and stage and between representation and reality. Because of the existence of these physical demarcations, a series of relationships is established: "the world on-stage vs. the world off-stage," and "the world inside the theatre vs. the world outside the theatre."[1] It is the first of these relations that will be the focus of this chapter. I will return to the latter in the final chapter which introduces the audience into the dramaturgy of the monodrama.

Quigley describes spatial relations by using a metaphor of "worlds," which arises naturally and inevitably when discussing theatrical space. The world motif provides insight into the function of space in theatre because of the implications of plurality that it carries with it. Quigley notes ambiguity in our use of the word "world" as an all-embracing term that encompasses everything that exists, because we also allow it to denote other, smaller spheres of lesser scope:

> [W]e can think of the larger world as being made up of a series of related smaller worlds, and on the other hand, we can think of an extensive open-ended domain in which the several worlds that constitute it offer no clear grounds for establishing a single larger whole....We can thus focus on the relationships among smaller worlds in terms of the way in which they contribute to our larger sense of the ultimate unity of the world (e.g. microcosm / macrocosm), or we can focus on similarities and differences among smaller worlds without attempting to assimilate them into some given larger whole.[2]

Such a plurality introduces the possibility of differing domains, and potentially incompatible worlds.

Women have traditionally occupied the spatial margins of society. Historically, their private space has been kept separate from the public world of politics and economics that excludes them. In theory their world is a domestic space of nurturing, passivity and subordination. Rarely is the private world of women the subject of dramatic inquiry which is more focused on the power plays of the public world. Rare is it that the theatrical space comes to represent woman's space. In the one-woman play, marginalized space becomes the focus and reclaims centre stage. The private, domestic, cultural and imaginary spaces of women are articulated and represented. However, what is discovered is that the representation of women's space also involves the articulation of the space that women are excluded from.

Private vs. Public Space

The speaker's "aloneness" is the overwhelming quality of woman's space in the monodrama. The space may contain a virtual clutter of set, lighting, sound and props equipment, but it never houses more than one person. "The presence of several figures on stage at the same time," says Manfred Pfister, "implies some form of spatial relationship of distance or proximity."[3] This relationship serves to define the kind (and amount) of space that is represented. It follows that in the absence of other characters on the stage, the solo body serves to define the space in its emptiness. The woman is alone and this carries with it semiotic implications of privacy: either isolation or solitude (the differences between which will be discussed subsequently). Furthermore, the private world, where the woman stands alone, is contrasted with the public (and populated) world that lies outside of her walls. In many ways, the empty on-stage space defines the populated off-stage space.

The Semiotics of Isolation

In Inside Out Ellen moves about the spaces of the kitchen and nursery. Despite the misnomer of "kitchen sink drama," this domestic space has remained for centuries the unexplored, private domain of women. Boyd's play carefully outlines and denotes the specific margins of this "Inside" space and turns it "Out". Though the setting is described by the stage directions as "a bright, sunny kitchen in a rented Toronto house," according to Globe and Mail critic Liam Lacey, Ellen finds herself "trapped in a doll's house kitchen".[4] The design concept defies realism and twists the familiar "Leave it to Beaver" mother and child space of domestic bliss and harmony. The distortions of wonderland are recalled as the set is revealed in crayon-bright colours, with oversized appliances made of wrapped tin-foil. The clock on the wall has no hands and suggests that the space exists out of time. Ellen's world is separate from the functions and rhythms of the regular public world that lie temptingly off-stage. The effect is overwhelming and garishly oppressive, as things often are when your only desire is to escape them. Boyd's point is that for many women the domestic space is nightmarishly isolated.

The stage directions indicate that the room is to be "suicidally clean," suggesting that Ellen is obsessed with the battle against mess at her own expense. Though part of this is due to Ellen's compulsive personality, subsequent stage directions suggest that the entire play is an ongoing struggle with the inevitable as Ellen tries to maintain the home demanded by those presently outside of it. Toast pops up and has to be buttered (100). Water boils and coffee must be made (100). Milk, honey, and various less savory substances have to be cleaned off the floor when deposited there by Arran (101-103). The child, the dishes, the fridge and the counter, herself all have to be cleaned and prepared for guests (105). Diapers have to be changed, the telephone answered, Daddy's mess has to be tidied, toys have to be picked up, dinner has to be prepared... and very little of this is for Ellen. It is all to please or impress her guests, her husband, her child, even her mother. With the exception of the few brief hours of nap time, when Ellen is allowed to work on her screen play, all of her energy is consumed by domestic chores. The play begins and Ellen is already complaining of cabin-fever (103). By the end she is suffering from claustrophobia induced hysteria and madness. Chaos is gradually taking over. Feeling the burden of it all, Ellen wanders to the door, peers out, breathes deeply and looks longingly at the night.

> Cold now...brain's stopped...LEMME OUT!...Calm...calm... (128)

Ellen's gaze directs the spectator's focus outside her door. Her space is finitely marked off from the world of auditions, contracts and dinner engagements that lies off-stage. Yet information from the outside finds its way indoors. The presence of the telephone, the answering machine and the radio are continual reminders of the public world of deodorant commercials, cocktails and politics that lurk just outside Ellen's door. Outside, Soviet submarines, cruise missiles and unemployment wreak havoc.

With "Out" so defined, "Inside" becomes a shelter. "Inside" becomes identifiable as the antidote to the economy of the public world that excludes Ellen. "Inside" is where the children are raised. "Inside" is where the husband, who leaves the domestic space every day to enter into the public realm, finds peace and comfort. But from Ellen's point of view, "Inside" is no safer than "Out". Ellen's feelings of entrapment stem from the reality that her space, and consequently herself, are defined by what lies outside. Her home exists as the invisible and silent infrastructure sustaining the public world to which Ellen is denied access. The prominence of the "potty" on the stage, combined with an abundance of fecal imagery, serve to position Ellen as the one who "takes the shit" in a space that is full of it.

> You two just waltz into Jason's office and out to dinner with him, while I sit here cleaning SHIT off the floor and making an ass of myself on the phone. I'll bet you had a good laugh over that at the happy hour. Sorry??!! Bull!!! You don't even know the meaning of the word. You try being Johnny-in-the-sink for a while and let me waltz about town being Johnny-on-the-spot, then we'll see how sorry you are.... Keep on truckin' partner"!... I must of crossed the bloody continent a dozen times by now. Trouble is partner, you're in a bloody limo and I'm on a God-damned tricycle. (130)

"Inside" is absolutely defined by "Out."

Further reinterpretations of private space are found in Preparing, which calls for the set of a dressing room or bedroom. Here again the traditional hierarchy of representation is turned inside out as the stage represents woman's private domain. As in Inside Out, private space is linked to the off-stage public world and is ultimately determined by it. The most prominent piece on the set is a dressing table with a mirror which reflects Jeannie's body as it is perceived by others. This is a constant reminder that the room is not a haven from the public world, but a space in which to prepare for one's entrance into that world. The set design supports this idea by filling the space with elements of costume and dress-up that will serve to prepare the performer for her roles in the outside world. One by one, all of the roles that Jeannie is to act out are conceived in this room. Simons renders the space consciously theatrical by suggesting a link with a "stage" outside of its walls. All activities within the space are dictated by the desires and needs of the "public" that waits for Jeannie's entrance.

All of Jeannie's private spaces have been so defined. Her childhood home was a stage of impersonations as her parents played the roles of high society authorities on everything from wine to French perfume. Later in life when she had a home of her own, her nights were racked with nightmares of intruders. Her fears became reality as her house was eventually burned at the hands of representatives of the public world of crime and violence (32). There is no such thing as a woman's space in Jeannie's world. There are only spaces where isolated women perform the rituals that make them acceptable to man's society.

In Janet Feindel's play, as in Simons', mirrors become metaphors for a room in which image and role are fabricated. Their presence in the private space of the strippers' dressing room is a constant reminder of the judgmental glare of the strip-tease client. The room also contains a costume rack full of glittering gowns (12), and an old fifties style mural of "voluptuous ladies on a city skyline". These images further locate the strippers' within a "particular" professional and economic class. As in Preparing, it is in this space that each of the women will don her make-up and her costumes. Again, the private spaces of women are determined by the market economy that drives the outside world.

Feindel pushes the representation one step further than Simons does by choosing to represent the stage and runway as well. All private areas connect to this public space, where a lurid combination of sleaze and glitz transform the women into commodities to be purchased and consumed by the spectator client. Spotlighting contrives to frame the dancers as objects on display. Further distortions are brought about by "stripper pink" lights up each side of the runway and a disco ball that hangs above (13). The stage is a space upon which each woman performs a part or assumes a role. It is a consumer space in which money is exchanged for the opportunity to look at groomed and made-up bodies. It is a space that by its very nature asks the performer to expose the most personal and private parts of her body to the public.

It would be unfair, however, to leave Feindel's use of space at this. There are specific conditions which differentiate this space from Simons' dressing room or Boyd's kitchen. Feindel describes the dressing room as a "place where lots of secrets have been shared" (12). The room is the place where all the women congregate, share their experiences and support each other's needs. The "preparing" room is also the place where a private community is created. It is a space away from the poor jokes of the MC, away from Nik and away from their consumer clients. .Feindel says the room must have a "sense of glitzy show business mixed up with a rather grotty, tarnished feeling: beads of sweat under cracked, caked-on make-up" (12). In this room the women strip for each other, but instead of their flesh, they expose their fears, their dreams and their fantasies. Furthermore, space is "loosely defined". From the public dance floor the spectator is given access to Marky's private thoughts (18). Similarly, Luv also becomes confidential from the runway (27). Spotlights which served originally to objectify also isolate the speaker from her environment, creating a temporary intimacy and escape from the violating gaze. Once the spatial boundaries are established they are transcended. Story-telling comes from all areas.

Feindel also defines the domestic space of a kitchen. As suggested in Chapter Three, the location of a stripper in a kitchen baking cookies disorients the spectator by presenting both a space and an activity unassociated with the economy of the sex trade. Theoretically, by presenting a domestic and private space, Feindel is undermining foregone conclusions that strippers are only toys existing for public consumption. Feindel's stage directions indicate that the kitchen should be sunny and warm, scattered with bits of memorabilia of Lil's days as a burlesque queen (12). Unlike Ellen's kitchen, the space is homey and inviting. The small mirror that hangs on the wall serves to reflect Lil's own true face without the make-up and costume (59).

Feindel attempts to argue that the workers of the sex trade are able to define private places where they can explore themselves both physically and emotionally. Yet, despite the effort to show how "woman's space" can exist outside of the space defined and restricted by public opinion, all of the playing spaces are a part of the world of the strip, and a very definite barrier separates that world and its inhabitants from everything else. The strip (and by extension all stripper hang-outs) is a marginalized wilderness whose spatial area is strictly limited by the opinions and rules of the dominant culture which sees strippers as "a particular class" with a correspondingly particular space. The strip is authorized by the dominant culture in response to a market demand for female flesh, but it is never incorporated into the mainstream of that economy. As Glynis' experiences at school indicate, strippers are not to leave their domain, be it the privacy of their homes or the public dance floor. Ultimately, though perhaps unwittingly, all of Feindel's spaces are qualified by the reality that sex trade workers are classified and evaluated according to where they work.

The spaces of Ellen, Jeannie and Feindel's women are determined by factors and opinions that are external to them. The wilderness is constructed as marginal and isolated. It exists apart from, yet is determined by, the space of the dominant culture. Serving to satisfy the domestic or sexual needs of patriarchal culture, women are confined and kept from the greater world. Even in A Particular Class of Women, where the space theoretically conveys a sense of community, the final image of Lil "performing" alone in her kitchen, serves to remind the spectator that all space has been mediated by Lil's memory (see Chapter Three). In the final analysis she stands alone, isolated and marginalized by public opinion. In these plays a woman's space does not reflect a woman's desires, hopes and dreams; instead it reflects her claustrophobic madness and her obsessive need to transform her body and appearance. A woman in these spaces knows herself only as she has been "fabricated"[5] by the world she moves in. The mirrors in her rooms envelop and paralyse her while pointing out what she isn't or where she lacks. In fact, in these spaces the women become mirrors themselves, reflecting back the forms of men. Luce Irigaray argues that for the commodity, there is no mirror that copies it so that it may be at once itself and its "own" reflection.[6] Similarly, for commodities, there is no private, personal space.

The Semiotics of Solitude

There is a distinction to be made between solitude and isolation that begins to revise this pessimistic conception of the female wilderness. The third monologue of La nef des sorcières introduces the distinction. The speaker of "l'Echantillon" is alone. Having chosen never to marry, this woman lives by herself out of choice. She dreams of a life of her own ("une vraie vie") and a place of her own ("une vraie maison" 36). Her solitude is a mark of her independence and her refusal to conform to the societal pressures that coerce many women into marriage for propriety's sake (34). The decision to be and to remain alone makes this woman's solitude very different from Ellen's, Jeannie's or Lil's. It is an active choice made in response to a personal need and not the needs of other individuals or the needs of society. However, as "l'Echantillon" makes clear, the decision to choose solitude can result in isolation. The speaker explains that her decision never to marry has marginalized her even further. As a woman is defined by the domestic space she creates for her family, so she is debased and ridiculed for choosing an alternative space of celibacy. The speaker has these cautionary words of advice for women who want their solitude.

> Mariez-vous, les petites filles, ça classe une femme. Mariez-vous on vous appellera Madame. Mariez-vous même si vous vous séparez le lendemain de vos noces, on vous dira Madame, Madame et pour toujours. (36)

Solitude implies isolation for this woman who concludes her address with the fear that she will always be lonely (38). Solitude implies that one is always subject to the tasteless comments and opinions of those in the public world (bosses, store clerks) who judge one mad for choosing to be alone. It is significant that this address comes from a train station and not from the private space that the speaker has defined as her own. She speaks from the public world where people circulate all around her, leaving their work places to return to their homes and families. She explains that because of her decision to choose solitude at home, she lives in isolation even when surrounded by people. When she wonders whether she will be alone on the train (38), the implicit answer is yes. Woman's space is isolated even in the midst of circulating traffic. When the woman refuses the assigned kitchen, dressing room or stage, she is left by herself.

Though pessimistic, the monologue of "l'Echantillon" begins to suggest that there is hope of defining a positive female space outside of the patriarchal culture. Space becomes a place of possibility - a blank page waiting to be defined by women's creative subjectivity.

Other monodramas of La nef des sorcières look at the potential private space holds for the woman who longs to uncover herself. In her first monologue, "L'Actrice" is shown in the public space of the theatre. She, like Feindel's women or Simons' Jeannie, is presented in costume, struggling with the roles imposed by public space. Spotlighting contrives to frame the speaker as one would a pretty photograph, to be gazed upon (16). However, "l'Actrice" appropriates the space by refusing to adhere to the demands of the public present to watch her play Molière. The stage directions call for her to sit down as if about to urinate. By so doing, she transforms the set of a classical play into the real here and now governed by human needs and desires. She challenges the assumption that the stage is a place for reciting memorized lines (17). In this transformed space,"elle y est bien" (18).

The redefinition of the public stage is repeated in l'Actrice's transformation of her private dressing room. The first piece is marked by attempts to move off the stage area to what is suggested to be the dressing room. She approaches this private space twice (17,19) before she actually enters it at the end of the first piece. She is clearly attracted to the space but fears it. Perhaps she recognizes it as a space of "preparation" and of "isolation." When she enters, it is dark and cold. She wraps herself in a fur coat as if to shield herself from the hostility of the space (20).

In the second monologue, l'Actrice tentatively begins to transform the dressing room. She lights candles in the darkness and walks around the stage with her light to assure herself of her solitude. The space begins to warm and she returns to her seat and begins to speak (51). Here, within the privacy of solitude, she is able to explore herself more thoroughly. She realizes that space has always defined her. As a child she learned that each individual has her place: "ma place, sa place, ma place, sa place" (54). She remembers leaving home to walk which resulted in family panic and a prompt restoration to her proper place. She remembers how trapped she felt (54). She remembers standing in the in-between space of her balcony, feeling neither inside nor out (51).

These are feelings she fights now that she has her solitude. Within the course of two monologues both the stage and the dressing room change dramatically. They cease to be isolating, binding, constricting spaces defined by factors external to them and become places that are defined by their occupant and according to her desires.

> J'aime le corps que j'ai pour moi toute
> seule, dans le miroir de ma chambre,
> Toute seule. (19)

In "Le retour de l'âge" the space is left physically neutral but is nevertheless defined as a space of personal ritual. It is a place that re-places the doctor's examining table, a place where the speaker is alone to explore her body and her memory. This image is further developed in the "Marcelle I" monologue which also constructs a personal space where a woman covets her solitude (64). In "l'Ecrivain" the speaker is in the privacy of her kitchen. She explains that alone she is able to sort herself out. With others "je deviens isolée" (78).

In La nef, each character is given her own narcissistic space. Within her walls mirrors are turned inward and reflect the image of the speaker only.[7] Each space is inscribed by invisible but impenetrable walls which separate her from the other characters in the play. The women make no contact with each other. Each is engaged in herself alone. It is suggested that solitude is a necessary component for self-revelation. As l'Ecrivain says, "Seule je parviens à me débrouiller l'esprit" (78). The creation of a room of one's own is the initial step toward the development of a feminist consciousness. It is the stage that precedes political organization or the gathering of women in a "women's space."

> [L]e drame se joue entre la salle et six femmes. Chacune isolée dans son monologue, comme elle l'est dans sa maison, dans son couple, incapable de communiquer du projet à d'autres femmes, inapte encore à tisser les liens d'une solidarité qui rendrait crédible et évidente l'opression qu'elles subissent et qui les fissure sur toute la surface de leur corps....[8]

However, the walls that separate the speakers from each other also separate their private worlds from that which is outside of them. It is made clear that this private space has been fought for and that the speakers' grasp upon it remains tenuous. Outside of each of these rooms lurk the same worlds that isolate Ellen, Jeannie and that "particular class of women." For the factory worker there is her boss and the store clerk who treat her poorly because of the conspicuous lack of a wedding band on her finger. For the actress there are her spectators anticipating the performance of the weak heroine in white. For Marcelle there is the heterosexual world of sanctioned love that forbids lesbian relationships. For the writer there is patriarchy that privileges men, money and power over just about everything else. These off-stage worlds necessitate these women's spaces, yet at the same time continue to threaten them.

Outside of la Marquise's room in Bien à moi is the equally threatening world of the "bois dormante," where handsome princes contrive to maintain sleeping beauties in glass cases while they roam the forests seducing cherubic children (27-37). La Marquise retreats to her private space to escape this outside world which to her is less "real," and fabricated upon legends and myths which empower men exclusively. La Marquise's bedroom is separate from the woods of socio-cultural fairly tales (she doesn't even have a telephone, 23). It contains only tools for self exploration: a writing table, a letter box and a bathroom mirror. As in La nef, the mirror is turned toward the speaker and reflects her needs within her own personally defined space. Her room is a private space in which she can touch/write herself, uncovering both her desires and her fears.

> Et je me vois enfin dans toute la nudité de mon absence [...] mon endroit. L'endroit, c'est moi. (39)

The space does not provide complete security however. Its walls are partially penetrable and La Marquise is faced with a ongoing battle with what she aptly calls the "enormous cultural heritage of motherhood" (32). She recognizes that implicit in her solitude is her isolation. She recognizes that the world outside her window excludes her and furthermore is threatened by her independence:

> [L]es belles de céans demeurent dans leur cadre tandis que dans la rue les chevaliers, maintenant élus par le peuple, rendent toujours hommage au soldat trop connu. (53)

Her grasp on her private space is not secure. She is sure of only one fact: the more space she has to herself, the more she loses sight of the forest and the prince "toute beau et toute à cheval" (36).

The world that lies outside Marjorie's trailer in Jewel, though not conceived as the public domain of patriarchy, is suggested to be equally as hostile. The textual notes explain that it is northern Alberta, Peace River Country (116), where the climate and the environment present challenges to human survival. Personal space as a shelter becomes a necessity when the outside world is rugged and remote. In a space like this, one is easily the victim of one's environment. Space quickly begins to determine one's life.

Marjorie remembers how when Harry brought her to the North, she felt "out of her territory" and into his (12). The space was new and alien.

> The inside of your blue nylon tent sweats in the morning sun. Through this gauzy half-moon of a window mosquitoes crash around; two little kids collect beer bottles in a potato sack, eat O'Henry bars at six a.m. (120)

Though she found it hard to imagine she was living in a space that needed missionaries (125), Marjorie quickly found ways to challenge the land, to cultivate the space and to make it her own (133). Feeling the need to control space, Marjorie sought out spaces of her own.

> The smell of wood makes me crazy. First winter with you in that cabin? Because we're just married I don't care a damn at first that we've built that little box to live in with wood that's green as lettuce. And that you stick to the wall every time you touch it.

> That there's no power or water and nearly no windows. That making coffee means half a day's work. But then I begin to notice everything; nothing is smooth, it's dark all the time, my clothes are alive with sawdust and the walls are alive with sap. So it starts, small at first but eventually this desperate longing, desperate and ashamed. I want to live in a trailer. I need to live in a mobile home. (134)

Marjorie transformed the wilderness and made a home for Harry and herself. But Harry was frequently away and Marjorie was faced with the isolation that drives Ellen mad. The only reminder of Harry's presence was a voice that filtered into their home through the radio.

At the time of the monologue Harry is dead. The radio messages only bring news of orders which have arrived at Buckerfield's (122). Marjorie speaks within her empty home, beside her empty bed, in the desolate countryside. A woman in Marjorie's support group suggests that widowhood gives one a continuous sense of displacement or "spacelessness".

> [W]idowhood, it's like checking into a motel for one night. One night that lasts the rest of your life. (137)

However, Marjorie refuses to adopt this attitude and is again transforming her isolation into solitude. Though she agrees that widowhood is like waiting to go on to another place, she rather likes that - it makes the whole world, the whole space that she has come to be so familiar with, look different.

> I mean the world certainly does feel like a motel in that everything looks so different. But you know Harry? Part of me likes that. It makes a walk with Wolf or just making dinner nearly miraculous. (137)

Marjorie is making her space hers alone this time.

> You know how when you stay in a motel everything looks different - the bed, the pattern on the carpet? even some dumb old TV show that you've watched every night of you life seems nearly exotic when you're in a motel. Very new. (137)

The lighting cue marked in the stage directions at the beginning of Scene One is the only lighting direction found in Jewel (121). It indicates an increase in lighting, transforming the tight focus needed for the prologue to a more general wash that reveals the set as the inside of a trailer. When the spectator is first introduced to Marjorie in the prologue, it is most likely that the space is darkened, leaving only Marjorie's body and the milk bucket beside her in light. This device serves to isolate the speaker outside of space (like the spot in Feindel's monologues) and develop her subjectivity. Once this intimacy is established and the lights come up, it is as if Marjorie is introducing her space to the spectator. Ray Conologue in his review of Jewel remarked that MacLeod's manipulation of the stage made it appear as if she was addressing her husband, also present in the room or just off-stage. Implicit stage directions located in questions like "You know Harry?" (123) and "C'mon dance with me" (126), do suggest that this is a shared space. Conologue only became aware of Marjorie's solitude as she began to unravel her story. This ambiguity is important for it presents Marjorie's trailer in a transitional state. The memories of her husband are inextricably associated with the space and Marjorie is discovered in the process of trying to reclaim the space for herself alone. In a sense she is exorcising a ghost that no longer has the right to haunt her domain. Conologue remarked that the presence of the husband diminished as the scene progressed and as Marjorie continued to reclaim the space as her own. By the end, Marjorie achieves solitude and renames her world according to her needs. In an act symbolized by the removal of her ring, the trailer becomes Marjorie's alone.

It is interesting to note that while the authors of monologues that define isolated spaces specifically describe appearance of the set, those who define spaces of solitude are more vague. Joan MacLeod specifies only that the stage must represent a trailer. All of the La nef spaces are characterized by their relative neutrality. Marie Savard indicates only that certain symbolic prop elements must be present. Manfred Pfister argues that when an author places emphasis on defining and representing space visually, she ascribes to space the function that predominates in the theatre of naturalism. "The wealth of material detail which surrounds the figures also has the additional function of emphasising the extent to which the figures are conditioned by external circumstances." Conversely, if the definition of space remains more neutral, "the focus of the presentation shifts towards the figure's inner consciousness, which is then classed as autonomous or 'un-conditioned' as far as the material or objective circumstances are concerned."[9]

Spoken Space

Up to this point discussion has been focused on the physical area represented on the stage of the theatre. In all of the above cases the qualities of space have been indicated by set pieces or by technical cues found in the explicit and implicit stage directions. The extent to which the space interacts with the character's perception of herself is largely revealed through her physical use of the space and its contents. The focus must now shift to the spaces that live in the words of the speakers. "Verbal localization technique" is the phrase used by Pfister to describe space as it is defined by a character's speech. It is a technique more generally known as word scenery and associated with Elizabethan drama where the spatial context is created through the utterances of the characters.[10] Within my selection of monodramas I have found three kinds of spoken space: cultural, recollected and imaginative. Some of these spaces have been referred to already, for example, the recollected space in the "Actrice" piece, or the cultural space that lies off of the stage in Preparing, Inside Out and Bien à moi.

In Judith Thompson's Pink, set and properties requirements are minimal and a neutral space is presented containing only Nellie's coffin. Cultural space is explored as visual space is abandoned almost completely in favour of the verbally defined. Through text, the space becomes a physical context for racism and comes to represent the world of apartheid. Within this landscape, space is subdivided, hierarchized and then allocated. A tension develops between "your space" and "my space" and "your place" and "my place." When Lucy cries "apartheid's for you" it is as if apartheid is a place to go - separate movies, separate bus stops, "your own little room" where "we even let your husband come once in a while...." The disempowered are relegated to the silence of the margins by the ruling class that maintains control of centralized, public space.

The Canadian north is "explained" by the set of The Occupation of Heather Rose.

> There is a table and chair in the room, a blackboard, promotional posters for Northern Medical Services, Indian Affairs, Ministry of Natural Resources, Northern Affairs etc. on the walls. (67)

Charts, posters, and guide books clutter the room and define Northern space in the same way that a spoken voice could.

This glossy, propagandist "North" was the first to "occupy" Heather. She was seduced by its romance and became possessed with the desire to experience it (89).

> I was going down, down, downward into another place, another time, falling through a rabbit hole into a green and silver world below. I was Alice in Wonderland. Shall I fall right through the earth? Splashing into a shower of diamonds and purple morning mist and water...bobbing up and down in a plane which had miraculously become a boat. (68)

Once there, Heather tried to reorder the North to make it look like the posters that decorate this office. She recounts her failure and she recalls her feelings of isolation, dislocation and not belonging.

> "How did I feel? Like a space ship which had landed in the middle of their living room, sending out little beeps.
>
> "Spaceship Rose to earth....I've located the Indians....What am I supposed to do now?" (77)

Heather could not create a romantic forest out of the North. Instead she found darkness and loneliness.

> Darkness everywhere. Dark except for the flashlights going back and forth, back and forth in the darkness... and the glow from the community hall.... (93)

When the cultural space described by the posters is juxtaposed with Heather's recollected space, it becomes apparent that the set is only a "version" of the North constructed by white "authorities" on Native Affairs. The North according to Heather, is a space for people who otherwise have no place. The Natives who originally defined and allocated space amongst themselves now inhabit reservations or spaces specifically marked out for them by the white man. They are prisoners, captured and forced to endure the sufferings that white man's "civilization" has imposed upon them. The North is also a space for white men and women do not fit in elsewhere. Heather asks, "What were all these people doing at Snake Lake? They were there because they did not fit anywhere else." (76).

The "official" stage space becomes oppressive to Heather. She finds it "sweltering" and has to leave to get fresh air. She knows that the space she has experienced cannot be represented in the way that this office imagines it. Heather is just beginning to understand that the North is neither hers nor the Department of Native Affairs' to define.

As Pfister avows, "spoken space" allows for a subjective interpretation of space that is not permitted by visually defined space.[11] Wendy Lill and Judith Thompson demonstrate that when space is defined imaginatively, it can be shaped to suit a particular ideology as do the posters in the Native Affairs office or as Lucy does within the context of apartheid. Verbal localization technique also allows one to represent space as one remembers it or as one experienced it, as Heather does.

In Louisette Dussault's Moman, the expanse of Quebecois culture is the verbally defined space of the performance. Though the speaker addresses the audience from a neutral space, Moman's story describes different spaces, including a train station and a bus (42,44,52). These are busy public spaces that function according to the various cultural codes that fabricate Quebecois society. The different cultural pressures operative upon French-Canadian women physically fill Moman's space as individuals pass social and moral judgements on her femininity or on her ability to be a mother or daughter (see Chapter Three). Oppressive cultural space is further extended into memory and recollected space through the "flashback "sequences. For example, Moman remembers feeling obliged to stay home when pregnant with her daughters while her husband engaged in the political affairs of the public world (102). Dussault suggests that the only way women can survive in such a coercive environment without losing their sense of self is to stand up and reclaim/rename cultural space as their own. At the end of her monologue, Moman makes that final gesture by insisting, "C'est là où j'en suis" (36).

In Diving, space also acquires symbolic meaning beyond the physical representation of a swimming pool. Space becomes cultural, and stands for a large territory seeking to engulf and consume its inhabitants. The space is Canada, a large expansive "pool" that surrounds and eventually incorporates the "diver" British Columbia. Unlike Heather Rose or Moman, however, Diving introduces an alternative to this uncomfortable space through the evocation of recollected space. Viveca's mind leaves the stage space in order to uncover a suspended space that exists in her memory. She withdraws from the here and now and returns to special non-antagonistic places she has known. Of particular importance is her apartment:

> It was a lovely apartment: just one room, but on the 15th floor - and a balcony. And there was a supermarket down below, and a car park and all those small cars like cockroaches coming and going, but what I could see most was the sky. (116)

This space was Viveca's own space. She lived in it and she determined it until it was violated by her mother, who let herself in and shattered Viveca's solitude. Nevertheless, the apartment still exists in Viveca's mind. The space of memory becomes a haven from an otherwise hostile environment.

Alternative spaces are also found by the Quebecois speakers of the monodramas of Jeanne-Mance Delisle. In each of the pieces, as in Moman, a problematic set of social codes and cultural/religious beliefs fill the space the speakers live in. Florence is not restricted by the walls of the bedroom represented on the stage, but by the vast and lonely quality of cultural space. Though she mocks her correspondent's comments on the "immense étendue du Quebec," she acknowledges the vast Canadian landscape as potentially lonely. On the other hand Florence appears to be suffocating. She is afraid of intimacy, afraid of sharing her space with another person. She exclaims that she has never been able to get close to anyone, and she argues that the men of Quebec do not understand what she wants: "Y a pas un Québécois qui m'aurait écrit comme ça!" (152). To escape this, Florence embraces imaginative space, dreaming of far away romantic locations:

> Ah! J'ai toujours rêvé des cafés-terrasses pis des marchés! Les bonnes femmes qui crient à fendre l'air, la vie qui rit partout, toutes ces couleurs, ça doit être ben gai! (150-51)

Geneviève's physical space looks more like Ellen's. It is a domestic space, once again ordered by a woman but shared with a man who is absent. Like Ellen, Geneviève keeps her space immaculate. She describes in detail the effort she puts into arranging the space so that it will be perfect:

> Bon, tout est correct...la boisson, les verres. [...] les draps, la chambre de bains, les draps mauve.... (159)

However, as in the "Florence" piece, the space is presented as deeply entrenched within a specific cultural landscape: "La robe de poupée, la p'tite bouquetière, la photo de famille, et surtout la chanson d'ma tante: 'Ils ont suivi les voies de la Sagesse, marchant tous deux à l'ombre de la croix'" (165). Where Geneviève is, is culturally where she "should" be. Geneviève sees her space as a very small hole carved out of a leafless tree. Only her head sticks out and if she is not careful Raymond is going to trap her inside. If she does not die of suffocation, she will live in the dark (166). Her only solace against this fear is her memory and her imagination. These transport her to alternative places where her desire is indulged. "J'tais allée aux fraises au bout d'la terre chez nous. Y avait envie d'faire un orage...." (162-63).

Delisle locates her final character, Martha, in a café, outside in the public world. Unlike Ellen, Florence and Geneviève, she is not isolated in a domestic/private space. She has refused to remain the captive of the kitchen, bedroom and nursery and instead has opted for the public world of business and commerce where she has turned her body into a commodity. Yet despite her circulation in the public world, she suffers from the same anxieties as the others. She speaks of the whole world as a "baraque maudite" desperately in need of a full house cleaning. So long as men and women continue to live within a cultural space that has women denying their sexuality while men exploit it, all will suffer. Her final cry is one of loneliness and isolation . "J'vas tu rester toute ma vie tu-seule à m'comprendre?" She, like the other two, worries that if she defies the cultural norm, she will spend her life alone (as will "l'Echantillon"). To challenge the space of cultural tradition is to risk being ostracised. To escape Martha recalls spaces of innocent passion from her childhood.

> Chu t'allée chercher la p'tite voisine pis on s'est rendues au bout du lot chez nous, pis on s'est roulées toutes nues dans la terre blanche. (170)

The same verbal localization technique that allows Thompson and Lill to define an imposing cultural space also allows Hollingsworth and Delisle to create (or recreate) liberating recollected spaces. This introduces the possibility of using spoken space to imagine new and previously unknown spaces defined for women, by women.

In Les vaches de nuit, an imagined, fantasy landscape, envisioned by a female architect, becomes the space of virtually the entire representation. The "real" space of "l'ordre-des-castrants", though never completely forgotten, is at least temporarily displaced. The landscape is verbally defined as made for women, and women only. It does not exist on the margins of the public world because it does not exist within the world as we know it at all. It is a complete replacement, a renaming of a world, located beyond the boundaries of everything:

> Ma mère galope, galope! Plus loin, plus loin, nous allons ailleurs. Cela s'accélère ainsi que le battement de l'oiseau-tonnerre. Nous partons encore et je sors la tête pour regarder dehors. Nous galopons vers le nord de la toundra, là où le corps de la terre d'Amérique se termine dans un mouvement d'une extrême blancheur. Nous galopons vers la toundra et les sabots de ma mère laissent derrière eux une traînée d'étoiles. (90)

The physical space of the theatre does not recreate the world of night cows described above. The speaker speaks in the day time in the context of restraint and isolation. She can only describe and anticipate the landscape of night vision. Yet, as described in Chapter Three, the language and movement of the performance transform an apparently neutral space. Its boundaries become less rigid and what was previously an unspecific space becomes an open blank space, ready for the colouring of the imagination. The space becomes liquid and "boundaryless" while ultimate freedom is suggested:

> Et nous partons! Et nous volons vers notre rendez-vous dans la voie lactée.
>
> Beauté! Le grand fleuve de lait, la terrain de l'enfance où mères et filles sont enfin réunies. Beauté! Beauté! Canaux de lait fleuris de nénuphars. Ivresse lactée, fluidité blanche, liquide astral, le fruit des entrailles de nos mères se répand dans le temps frais du ciel. (87)

Les vaches suggests that women can do more than anticipate a space of their own. They can imagine one and in so doing, dare to invent their future.

The Politics of Space

Part of our fascination with theatrical production is its particular ability to create and differentiate worlds through the physical demarcation and allocation of space. The distinctions existing between on and off-stage space make the theatre a particularly dynamic place to undertake the physical exploration of the woman's wilderness as it has been marginalized and rendered invisible in the greater public space of power politics and economics. Representations of the female wilderness can document women's private space as isolating and claustrophobic. Space becomes a prison when one does not choose to be there, or when one desires to leave it but cannot. Space becomes threatening when its limits and possibilities are determined not by its occupants but by those who move about freely outside of it.

There is nothing new about this argument. The idea that the private world (and its female occupants) is determined by the public world is one that has been fundamental to feminist criticism since before the turn of the century. However, in theatre it acquires a particularly subversive power. The physical properties of theatre allow for the public representation of a space that has heretofore been private and invisible. At the same time it marginalizes or renders invisible that space which has always been public and which has always determined how we think about our society. While the private world becomes public on the stage, the public world gets sent to the wings. In this inverted state of affairs, the private worlds of women necessitates critical revisions of public space.

This inverted analysis can also be extended to the plays that represent private spaces that are liberating or that offer shelter from the hostile, anti-female, public world. In these plays, the private space is defined not by the world outside it but by its present occupant - the woman alone. The public space looms, often threateningly, outside the walls of these women's spaces but in no way determines what happens within them. In these cases the on-stage space exists in spite of the off-stage space. Again, the empowerment brought about by the possession of a room of one's own is not new to women's writing. However, the actual representation of this private state empowers the space to define that which is outside of it - that which threatens it. Once again the representation of the private spaces of women forces a reinterpretation of the unrepresented public world.

Spoken space works in the same way as scenic space, only on a larger plain. I have argued that imagined space offers the possibility of representing cultural landscapes where walls are built out of ideology instead of wood. In these vast and populated spaces, women are discovered to be confined, isolated and unable to define either their space or themselves. Their isolation is determined by their "otherness" to a world that insists on their passivity and restraint. Alternatively, memory and imagination construct landscapes that are celebratory and suggest the freedom to move about in constant and continual exploration of the self. In turn, the liberating powers of memory and the imagination refocus and challenge traditional perception of the greater cultural space.

In all of these plays space is exposed as "property", assigned and restricted by an “authority” which is once again undermined. Private space becomes public space and the public is no longer the same. "Playing solitaire" becomes political, inverting the hierarchy and redetermining reality.

> La femme qui écrit jongle sur une chaise de cuisine. Confrontant les sentences du père avec le silence de sa mère et de ses soeurs.

C'est dans la cuisine que j'écris. Café bruits de la rue. Un arbre que j'aperçois par la fenêtre. Je ne lave plus mon linge sale en famille. C'est public. Faut que ça se voit, que ça se sente, que ça se sache ce qui salit le plus, ce qui déteint, ce qui est cousu de fils blancs. ("L'Ecrivain", La nef des sorcières. 78)

NOTES

[1] Austin E. Quigley, The Modern Stage and Other Worlds (New York and London: Methuen, 1985)14.

[2] Quigley 12.

[3] Manfred Pfister, The Theory and Analysis of Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 257-58.

[4] Liam Lacey, "Play Turns Motherhood Inside Out," rev. of Inside Out, by Boyd, Tarragon Theatre, Toronto, Globe and Mail 3 March 1986: C10.

[5] Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 176.

[6] Irigaray 176.

[7] The set of La nef described by Adrien Gruslin ("Treize Femmes en colère,"rev. of La nef, Théâtre du nouveau monde, Montreal, Le Devoir 11 mars 1976: 12) was composed of geometric playing levels and mirrors.

[8] Nicole Brossard and France Théoret, Préface, La nef des sorcières, by Brossard et al (Montreal: Quinze, 1976) 7.

[9] Pfister 265-66.

[10] Pfister 267.

[11] Pfister 269.

CHAPTER FIVE
The Invariable Condition:
Spectatorship, Gender and the Women's Monodrama

"In an important sense," says Keir Elam, "it is the spectator who initiates the theatrical communication process through a series of actions at once practical and symbolic of which the first is the simple act of buying a ticket." Elam elaborates that the audience by its very presence "constitutes the one invariable condition of the performance....It is with the spectator, in brief, that the theatrical communication begins and ends."[1]

The role of the spectator in the constitution of theatrical representation has recently become the focus of dramatic theory and criticism, particularly for feminists influenced by the work of their colleagues in film theory. Sue Ellen Case, agreeing with Elam, argues that the "signified is produced by the recipient of the signifier," and the performance text is not only constituted by the words and the physical representation but by the location of the theatre, the price of the ticket, the attitude of the ushers and the response of the audience. The composition of the audience is therefore an "element in the co-production of the play's meaning."[2] The spectator can be seen as a co-author of the play as his/her age, gender, and cultural make-up become crucial to the meaning of the performance. Film critic Laura Mulvey suggests that the looker/spectator is essentially active, "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze...." [3] According to Case, traditional art, structured around the principles of unfulfilled male desire (see Chapter Three), posits the spectator as the subject who imposes meaning on the female object :

> When the audience looks at a woman on the stage she is perceived
> as a possible site for the fulfilment of that [male] desire,
> transformed into a kind of cultural courtesan.[4]

The represented woman is silent and passive. Her gaze is disregarded.

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has
> been split between active-male and passive-female. The
> determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure

> which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist roles women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.[5]

Jill Dolan approaches the issue from a textual angle by suggesting that it is the play that retains the authority to define the spectator. Through the conventions of the stage, the performers' address works to constitute an "amorphous, anonymous mass" of ideal spectators carved in the likeness of patriarchal culture.[6] All the material properties of theatre are manipulated so that the performance is intelligible to the white heterosexual male, leaving the female spectator invisible, silent and "other". The female spectator, viewing such a traditional representation, finds herself in an outsider's position. She cannot find her way into the representation because she, as a woman, is excluded from the address. If women are represented at all they are represented passively, acting under male authority:

> She [the female spectator] sees women as mothers, relegated to supporting roles that enable the more important action of the male protagonist. She sees attractive women performers made-up and dressed to seduce or be seduced by the male lead. While the men are generally active and involved, the women seem marginal and curiously irrelevant, except as a tacit support system or as decoration that enhances and directs the pleasure of the male spectator's gaze.[7]

In Dolan's analysis, the playwright's conception of the audience can be uncovered through an examination of the political and moral values espoused by the play. Theoretically, the exposure of these desires uncovers the "ideal" spectator. [8,9] Both Case and Dolan have articulated strategies for the deconstruction of spectatorship, the former looking at the authority of the spectator over representation and the latter looking at the authority of the representation over the spectator. In combination, these critical strategies facilitate an understanding of possible speaker/spectator relationships in the monodrama.

The "Other" Oriented Play

Hollingsworth's Diving and Simons' Preparing are illustrations of the deconstruction of the female body into the socio-cultural codes dictated by the particular spaces they inhabit (see Chapters Three and Four). In these pieces the speaker is objectified by the conditions of her representation. Her sense of self is founded entirely upon the evaluation of others. In Diving, the active agents are Viveca's mother, the landlord, and the male voice. These agents participate symbolically in the larger cultural force (nationalism) that is engulfing individual cultural identity (Viveca/the salmon/British Columbia). They are the subjects who force meaning upon Viveca's disenfranchised body. In Preparing, the cultural gaze is replaced by the male gaze. Jeannie's ritualized preparation is an analysis of how women's bodies are evaluated according to physical appearance. Value is established as dependant upon the desires of the patriarchal society outside of the dressing room. In these two plays the power of the subject does not lie with the speaker but with the dominant culture that is just off-stage. The authority, or the power to determine Viveca's or Jeannie's significance, is maintained by those who look at them. In this sense, power becomes directly attributable to the spectator who gazes upon the represented body and affixes to it meaning.

However, while the speaker is determined by the gaze of the audience's sanctioning body, the audience is collectively assigned the identity of the guilty dominant culture. Though the presence of the male voice cannot be forgotten in Diving, Viveca speaks "as though she has forgotten herself" (115). She is completely alone in her "mind space" and no listener is acknowledged. The spectator is also unrecognized and therefore assumes the position of a voyeur given privileged access to the private and personal. However, the use of a complex system of signs that require an intellectual distance to decipher, forbids a personal, individual response by demanding intellectual analysis. For example, while Viveca is speaking of her childhood or her relations with her mother and society, any emotional empathy generated in the spectator would be jarred by the seemingly ridiculous figure of a skinny girl in a bathing suit with leaves stuck on it (115). Similarly, the emotional impact of the skeleton hanging from the diving board is immediately overshadowed by the spectator's intellectual need to decipher the image. The spectator's response is dictated by keeping him/her at arm's length from the performance. Attention is drawn to his/her authority to determine the significance of the representation. It becomes evident that the spectator is being constructed as a part of the body of people (including the male voice and Viveca's mother) that determine what Viveca signifies. The spectator is, by association, assigned the collective identity of the dominant culture, responsible for the objectification of Viveca.

In Preparing a listener for the speaker is identified and aligned with the spectator from the beginning, as the "you" that Jeannie addresses is located in the space of the audience. As discussed in Chapter One, the speaker performs for her spectator. She is overtly theatrical and makes the spectators feel like spectators. Jeannie's life has been a drama and she recreates it as such, continuously performing for those who observe her. There are moments when her memorised text fails her (see Chapter One). But these are moments in which she has forgotten her spectators. Once reminded of their presence she resumes the performer position and continues to play. As Jeannie dons masks and costumes through various stages of her life, the spectator is reminded of how important "being looked at" actually is. The spectator is recognized as crucial to the cycle of deception and role-playing because it is his or her gaze which sanctions and approves the appearance of the performer. The text necessitates his/her presence as it becomes apparent that it is for the spectator that Jeannie "prepares". It is the spectator's needs and desires that she responds to. Simons' deconstruction of role-playing (see Chapter Three) suggests that Jeannie's public is responsible for her cynicism and suffering. Jeannie is overtly aware of the power her public has in the determination of her worth. With this awareness, she similarly condemns all of her spectators as guilty. Focus is shifted to the spectator as the subject/object who simultaneously determines the representation and is determined by it. The collective "you" that Jeannie prepares for is defined as hostile and antagonistic from the first lines of the play where she cries "Fuck 'em all." (26)

Hollingsworth and Simons are writing with specific political agendas in mind. Hollingsworth is taking jabs at the Canadian identity and Simons at patriarchal ritual. Each constructs her spectators as members of the dominant culture who possess the power to name, control and ultimately transform reality. Moreover, each criticises her audience's naming practices and points out the restrictiveness of its vision. In this context, it is the playwright who retains control of meaning. The "authorial intent" is to force a new awareness of specific political issues upon a collectively culpable audience

Judith Thompson positions herself similarly in Pink, the focus of her attack being the apartheid system in South Africa. Written for the Arts Against Apartheid Benefit held in Toronto in 1986, Pink was part of an evening highlighted by a reading from "A Part of My Soul" by Winnie Mandela. Thompson's play is a rare case in which the the nature of the audience can be determined by the context of the performance. Her monologue is addressed to the affluent spectator able to afford the cost of a benefit ticket. The "ideal" spectator is a member of the dominant culture who retains the authority to make change.

In this position the spectator is aligned with Lucy who, by virtue of the colour of her skin, wields power. However, as Lucy's privilege was shown to be qualified by the presence of Nellie's coffin (see Chapter Three), so the audience's privilege of position is challenged. Nellie is subversively empowered as she signifies both Lucy's and the spectator's participation in the perpetuation of apartheid. The audience is collectively pronounced guilty. Thompson defines her spectators as able and powerful and therefore responsible.

> Even though I'm ten years old I made you die. I made you go in that march and I made you die. I know that forever. (77)

In theory, Diving, Preparing and Pink each present systems of signs which must be decoded by gaze of the spectator. However, the individual spectator's authority to determine meaning is interrupted by the power of the representation to pass a guilty verdict over the collectivized audience. In this kind of "other-oriented" representation it is the playwright who governs the hierarchy and who acts as the ultimate authority with the power of distinguishing victim from victimiser.

Relations of Intimacy: The Speaker/Spectator Confidence

The dissolution of the wall between the spectator and the representation includes the audience, in a more intimate way, in the performance. If the speaker acknowledges and addresses the spectator as a friend or confidant, and the spectator recognizes that he/she is there to listen and participate, then the tendency to objectify or collectivize either party as "other" is theoretically reduced. The speaker is revealed in the simultaneous process of uncovering herself and exposing herself to individuals whose presence/participation becomes integral to the revelation.

In The Occupation of Heather Rose the spectator is immediately acknowledged by the speaker as Heather's listener. The initial stage direction stipulates that Heather enters the stage area speaking to herself. She immediately recognizes the audience and and turns toward it, acknowledging its presence and thereby breaking down the fourth wall (67). The spectator is immediately offered the role of listener/confidant as Heather proceeds to recount her story. As discussed in previous chapters, Heather suffers from loneliness.

She needs to talk. She seeks release from all of the memories that are presently occupying her body and soul. She needs to be heard and she reaches out to the spectator.

Chapter One noted that short sentences and shorter paragraphs provide for a choppy, fragmented flow. It seems possible that Wendy Lill has incorporated pauses or opportunities for audience response into the dramaturgy of her text. Heather begins her description of Snake Lake with her flight and her arrival. The commentary ends with:

> Arrived. (68)

A one-word sentence is followed by a period which is a clear pause and a turning over of the power of speech to the spectator. There is space for absorption and response.

Other words are isolated and singled out for the spectator, particularly those printed on the blackboard: INDIAN, WHITES, CULTURE, ALCOHOL. These words face the spectator as jarringly as the leaves stuck onto Viveca's bathing suit. Heather writes them on the wall, repeats them and pauses. Spaces are left, once again, for response. The spectator cannot escape them; they are written, tangible, demanding a reaction. As Heather falls into recollection, she is carried away but never for long. She is drawn back to the spectator with something she must show or tell. Her reading of Nurse Bunny's medical reports is a direct address. She holds up the sketch of the broken horseshoe to confirm the presence of the spectator and to request the participation of others in her discourse.

Heather begs the audience to share her space. She transcends the walls that separate Viveca, Lucy and even Jeannie from their audience. She is a woman "occupied" by an experience that she cannot validate alone. Her Northern isolation has erased her. Now she needs to be redrawn, reconfirmed, acknowledged as more than a failure. There is a growing urgency to her tone, an increasing sense that if Heather is to "get her ducks in order" she must hear from someone who knows about it all. In her lonely station she has spoken to no one; no one has spoken to her. Dialogue failed with men (80-81), with her mother (79-80) and with the natives. Her cry "ANSWER ME!" transcends her monologue and is launched to the audience as a desperate plea.

Reg Skene's review of the play at the Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg criticized Laurel Paetz's performance as Heather precisely because she did not allow the audience to share in Heather's monologue enough to "experience the emotions themselves."

> Paetz tends to rush the process, to allow insufficient time for our response, not really to receive that response at all.[10]

It is clear that Heather's appeal reached this particular spectator who wanted the opportunity to participate but was frustrated with Paetz's denial of the sympathetic response her character seems to demand. However, it occurs to me that what Skene interpreted as poor acting might have been intentional and grounded in the text. If Paetz had established the audience contact that Heather seems to want then the play would end with the resolution of Heather's "occupation". Lill makes it clear that her piece is not to resolve itself with this kind of closure. Heather cannot "unload this," (94) despite her desire to do so, because she is not ready to listen. She has not worked out her feelings in private and needs to pursue the potential of monologue before she can accept dialogue. Despite its call for audience response, Lill's play relies on the maintenance of Heather's isolation.

> [W]hat did I think would happen here? that I would somehow be able to unload this, I can't. It's inside me now. (94)

The communication impasse leaves the spectator frustrated. Thus ignored, he/she is returned to the outsider's position. Ultimately the spectator replaces the absent Miss Jackson as the powerless representative of the bureaucracy of social support systems. Like Hollingsworth, Simons and Thompson, Lill asserts her role as author and constructs both speaker and spectator so as to underline and critique the conditions of Heather's isolation.

The power of authority is more fully undermined through the establishment of immediate connections between the playwright and the representation. When the playwright herself appears as the the speaking subject of the representation, she no longer exists as the invisible puppeteer who ultimately controls play and audience. The clear distinctions between theatre and life are blurred as the playwright physically participates in the voicing of the female text, the re-dressing of the female body and the discovery of the female space. Under such conditions the "author's intent" ceases to dominate the understanding of the performance text. Instead it participates in alliance with all other theatrical elements including audience response. In the initial performances of the monodramas of Janet Feindel, Pamela Boyd and Joan MacLeod the playwright was theoretically no longer the absent ruler of meaning. She was unabashedly present as she participated along with the spectator.

Before one jumps into a full acceptance of this concept, however, one must be prepared to acknowledge that the intimate address initiated by the playwright herself is not always successful in its desire to empower both spectator and speaker. Other dynamics come into play. In A Particular Class of Women, when the lights came up on Janet Feindel playing Lil, she would have acknowledged the presence of the audience (as the stage direction instructs) and spoken directly to it. The spectator would have been her listener.

> Well, I mustta had something. For twenty-two years, I manage to turn guys on. I mustta had something. Whatever it was that turned them on, I had it. I can still turn on an eighteen-year-old no problem.... (15)

Tone and confidentiality dictate that the spectator is being assigned the specific role of friend. The "ideal" spectator is suggested to be a stripper herself. She sits with Feindel in the dressing room and she participates in the representation of the strip. The spectator and Feindel share the play, each assuming at different times the identities of individual strippers. For example, at the top of Act Two, Angel enters the stage and addresses the spectator, who assumes the position of Lil previously played by Feindel:

> Hey Lil, get this one. How do you get three Newfies off a fence?
> [...] Sorry, Lil, just trying to make you laugh. (35)

The gaze is implicitly female. All spectators (ideal or not, male or female) are involved with Feindel and the characters that she plays. Feindel's body does not exist in a state of to-be-looked-at-ness, rather she is a real and empowered woman who explains experience by asking her listeners to enter into and participate in her world.

However, the intimate confidences of these women remind the spectator that each woman's worth is somehow related to audience estimation. In subsequent scenes Feindel as Petal Rose "teases" the audience with her stockings (27). As Marky she dances on a table (18). As Georgia Scott she removes her shorts and her top, changes her bra and then reveals her pubic hair cut in the shape of a heart (50). The spectator discovers that the value of the characters is subject to his/her evaluation. Feindel as a performer becomes an object of lust, fetishized for her potential to satisfy sexual desire, and the "ideal" spectator becomes one who understands the economy of the strip. What was established as a mutually active relationship between spectator and performer is transformed into a situation where the active spectator determines the meaning of the passive, objectified performer. The gaze is suddenly male and the spectator/confidant, willingly or not, also becomes the client of the strip bar.

Feindel may be attempting to study the "wilderness" of the strip by playing with the male and female gaze. It can be argued that her play seeks to comment upon the odd contradiction that exists between the subjectivity of the individual strippers and the inevitable objectification of women implicit in the sex trade. However, her argument becomes convoluted when one considers the emphasis the play lays on space (see Chapter Four). Feindel makes a clear distinction between what happens inside the club and the world outside. Whether the spectator holds the position of male client (observing the naked body of the female performer) or female confidant (listening to the impassioned accounts of these women's lives), he/she is inside the club and is functioning according to its rules. A spectator alienated by the representation and angered at its manipulation of her/his gaze is constructed as silent and passive. This "non-ideal spectator", disturbed by the sexist language (see Chapter Two) and by the physical exposure of Feindel's body (see Chapter Three) finds no place in the representation. He/she is outside or "other" and must remain silent, passive, and inconspicuous, for fear of being labelled chauvinist, classist or prudish. The title of the play, "A Particular Class of Women," hints at precisely this "outsider" position. The spectator who refuses to buy into Feindel's representation finds him/herself in the judge's gowns, moralizing in the same way.

When Pamela Boyd assumed the role of Ellen in the Toronto production of Inside Out, the connections between the playwright and the character that she was representing would have been immediately apparent to the spectator. However, the full impact of Boyd's "self-performance" would not have been felt until Boyd actually established contact with the audience. Up until the point where Ellen mimes the suffocation of her child, the audience of Inside Out has been held at a distance from the representation. The only listener constructed for Ellen is Arran whose presence is at the root of his mother's frustration. The spectator's presence has been left unrecognized behind the convention of the fourth wall. At this moment, however, upon realizing the significance of her actions, Ellen raises her head to the audience and utters a silent scream for help. The fourth wall is instantly shattered and the spectator is exposed and invited into Ellen's space. As the boundary that distinguishes "play" from real life is traversed, an intimate connection is also established between the spectator and the performer. The speaker's outward shift in focus transforms the character into a real person. Moreover, the spectator would have been confronted with the reality that Boyd herself played Ellen. Life and theatre would have been further confused as the distinctions between author and character were reduced. The play assumes the qualities of an intimate confidence as one is no longer sure of the difference between representation and reality. The spectator is transformed into a responsible confidant who does not determine the speaker but instead acknowledges her as a real, live person and responds to her. The play now depends on a subjective commitment by the spectator, who is not an authority but a friend. At this very moment the spectator is asked to understand what it must be like to be Boyd/Ellen, and to offer support. The relationship is non-hierarchical as neither speaker, playwright nor spectator is completely constituted by the other.

If Dolan's assumptions are correct and content is the cornerstone of spectatorship, then this piece goes a long way toward bridging the gap existing between the female spectator and texts which espouse the experience of the dominant culture. Though perhaps not directed exclusively to the female spectator, focus is shifting in her direction. Boyd's "self-performance" in Inside Out begins to expose a specifically female self in the mirror. The representation reflects the needs and concerns of a particular women and an important appeal is made directly to the female spectator, asking for support and recognition.

The kind of intimacy created by Boyd in Inside Out can be disturbing to the spectator. Ray Conologue in his review of the Toronto première of the Jewel noted the intimacy created by MacLeod's "personal" performance of her own play. He described the representation as unbalancing and as requiring emotional readjustments on the part of the spectator. "Theatre," Conologue argued, " is conventionally based on a certain distance from the material. When that distance is foreshortened, discomfort can result."[11] What

Conologue seems to have missed is that "discomfort" serves to continuously remind the spectator that he/she is implicitly involved in the representation.

In the prologue to Jewel Marjorie "speaks directly to the audience" (117). Unlike Inside Out where the listener/spectator is not acknowledged until nearly the end of the piece, here he/she is the direct recipient of Marjorie's communication. Marjorie's physical appearance and position are intimate and her address to her listener is confidential.

> *You* are six years old and folding up this gigantic piece of white tissue paper until it's the size of *your* hand and then attacking it with these dull little scissors, chopping the corners off, driving a hole right through the middle.... (emphasis mine, 117)

The pointed use of the pronoun "you" helps to define the characteristics the spectator is presumed to possess. Jewel continues to bridge the gap between the female spectator and theatrical representation by defining an empowered female subject that is reaching out to a sympathetic listener. The "ideal" spectator is a confidant (probably female) who can empathize, through experience, with Marjorie's memories. Assuming a more "female" gaze, the spectator becomes included in the moments experienced by the speaker, and both speaker and spectator are released from the "other-oriented cycle." In this intimacy the representation ceases to participate in the hierarchy of authority that collectivizes the audience and objectifies the speaker. The speaker is shown in the process of coming to know herself, and the audience provides support and empathy for her.

However, when the speaker embarks on the body of the text, the dynamic changes. In the second part of the piece, though the intimate tone continues, the "you" is identified as Harry (121). With this shift in focus the spectator ceases to be considered as an autonomous participant in the representation and is manipulated into the position of Harry. It seems plausible that this coup de théâtre would immediately dispossess the female spectator of any role in the representation, as she is forced to align herself with Harry and all he represents. However, because the spectator is initially acknowledged as possessing an individual identity outside of the one that is collectively imposed upon the audience, Marjorie's redefinition of the spectator, though requiring some adjustment, is not so jarring. It is as if the spectator is first acknowledged independently and then invited to "stand in" for Harry, so as to facilitate Marjorie's self-exploration. Ultimately, the redefinition of the spectator has the effect of increasing intimacy. The body of Jewel is like the other "valentines" that Marjorie shares. The piece becomes an expression of a woman's identity that is just beginning to emerge out of its isolation. The audience is privileged in its presence, for it is allowed to witness and participate in the communication of the specifically female self to the public world.

When Janet Feindel removes her clothing in the dressing room, she shares her experience and her dreams with her confidants; when Pamela Boyd cries out for help or when Joan MacLeod leads her listener through her scrapbook of valentines, the spectator is being taken into confidence not only by the dramaturgy of the piece but by the playwright herself. As dialogue begins to form between playwright and spectator, intimacy is enhanced and the performance becomes more urgent. However, these pieces must be distinguished from"happenings" or auto-performance art in which life and art are inseparable. It would be a mistake to conclude that Janet Feindel is Lil, that Joan MacLeod is Marjorie or that Pamela Boyd is Ellen. Rather, the presence of the playwright on the stage has semiotic implications for the spectator which bring representation and life, and therefore speaker and spectator, closer together.

Feminist Redefinitions of Speaker-Spectator Relationships.

I have suggested that to varying degrees , the monologues of Lill, Feindel, Boyd and MacLeod invite the spectator into the space of representation and allow him/her to enter into a one-on-one relationship with the speaker. Louisette Dussault argues that this kind of emotional involvement risks distracting the spectator from the subject of the play. Dussault believes that the spectator who identifies emotionally with the speaker suffers feelings of powerlessness and guilt which distract her from the overall purpose of the text. She avoids this in her own work through humour:

> Les illustrations de personnages...dédramatisent le sujet et, du moins je l'espère, évitent de culpabiliser le monde. Ca fait rire et quand tu ris, tu es sans défence, plus disponible pour te laisser imprégner par le sujet; en même temps, tu gardes une certaine distance par rapport à l'émotion du personnage.[12]

The text is covered with parenthetical directions stipulating that the speaker direct her focus "au public." Unlike MacLeod, she uses the direct address to prevent an emotional identification on the part of the spectators with the speaker. Her approach is Brechtian (like Hollingsworth's), in effect denying the possibility of empathy with the mother character. In Moman, songs, multiple characters played by one woman, and flashbacks disrupt the spectacle and forbid emotional intimacy by drawing attention to theatricality. Whether or not this is successful in performance is difficult to conclude. I find it nearly impossible to imagine a spectator who could remain detached through some of the powerful recollection sequences, particularly when performed by Dussault herself. However, the playwright's point must be considered, for it refocuses this chapter in the direction of a final group of plays that render the speaker and spectator more active (and more political) through their specific feminist agenda.

The constant emphasis on distance required in Dussault's play eliminates the kind of emotional responsibility placed upon the confidant-spectator in plays like Inside Out or The Occupation of Heather Rose. It becomes clear that the incidents that Moman acts out are vehicles for Dussault's political message: "il faut tuer la mère," [13] which is implicitly directed to the female spectator. For example, Moman says to her mother:

> Je ne suis pas en colère contre toi!!! Je ne suis jamais en colère contre toi!!! Mais je suis en colère, par exemple! Je suis en colère contre tout ce qui est ENTRE nous... ENTRE nous autres... Les détours que tu prends pour me parler... Les détours que je prends pour te parler.... Les choses que tu me caches, que je te cache....(128)

Dussault is interested in articulating the "ENTRE". It is not the events, the actions, the individual story that requires the emphasis but the political/patriarchal context of this story.

Though not concerned with achieving the distance Dussault perceives as necessary for the transmission of a political message, Jeanne-Mance Delisle makes a similar effort to draw attention to the political context of her piece through the identification of a female spectator. The first two pieces articulate the urgent need of the speaker to be heard. Both women labour over the constant preparation of their bodies and words for the men they want to seduce and both cry out for a listener who will take them as they are. Florence, frustrated with trying to create an artificial persona in her letters to foreign men, longs to reach out and communicate with a partner who listens. Her concluding words are coloured by a desperation that calls for a sympathetic listener:

> A tous les soirs, j'me parfume, j'm enveloppe de chimères, j'attends l'baiser d'un prince, pis j'me casse la gueule su l' bord de mon litte! (155)

Geneviève, also trying to work her way out of her solitude, explains her relationship with Raymond in a way that imagines an uninformed listener who has to be filled in on the details of her marriage:

> Y est dans une affaire de notaires, pis moé chu secrétaire. Nous formons un couple bien assorti, bien élevé, bien esthétique. (159)

This imaginary listener is quickly taken into confidence as the intimate details of the relationship are exposed.

> J'me réchauffe, y s'réchauffe, on s'réchauffe. Pis on finit par prendre le bord d'la chambre. Là, faut que j'soye prête à sauter

> dans l'litte quand Raymond va avoir rangé ses vêtements, très sagement su a chaise. (161)

Soon the listener is sharing in Geneviève's intimate fantasies and memories (162-63). The piece closes with Geneviève's words of warning: "La virginité, ça s'perd dans l'noir mais l'marriage, ça s'fait au grand jour" (165). These are spoken to the imaginary listener who not only provides a sounding board for Geneviève's feelings but listens to her advice as well. Like Florence, Geneviève needs to be heard and in the absence of a listener she fabricates one. As suggested in Chapter Four, Delisle questions why these women stand alone within their restrictive cultural space. Their imaginary relationships stand in pathetic contradiction to the women's physical solitude. They appear powerless and even mad.

This dynamic is completely transformed in the third monologue where the imaginary listener of the first two pieces is replaced by the spectator. In "Martha", the desired confidant of the first two monologues is actualized in the spectator as the fourth wall is torn down by direct address. She asks the spectators if they recognize her and then she introduces herself. Her introductory familiarity invites her listeners to sit down beside her at her café table. She immediately begins to unwind her memory and to confide, much as Florence and Geneviève have done. However, the presence of a second party within her space is empowering. Martha's monologue is sharper and much more confident in tone. Having an identified listener in the spectator provides a clear direction in which to vent her frustration and anger.

Delisle's ideal spectator is one who can sympathize with these women's despair over a "bordel" of a culture so desperately in need of transformation (171). The "feeling" that this spectator is female is grounded in fact at the play's conclusion when Martha calls out, "J'ai-tu des soeurs?" (176). This is a recognition that following monologue there must be dialogue - between women. It is suggested that Florence's and Geneviève's anxiety come from their isolation from their "sisters." It is suggested that there is power in numbers, that together women might make a difference. When Martha asks her listener-spectator "Y a-t'il quet'chose de vrai dans l'monde?"(175), the female spectator is asked to enter into a pact with the speaker in which the two of them will team up for change. Through the acknowledgment of the female spectator, Delisle transforms the stage space from a world which isolates and confines women (like Florence and Geneviève) into one which places them in contact with each other, thereby giving them the energy to, at the very least, be angry.

In these last two plays a feminist agenda, namely a revision of patriarchal/hierarchical society, is clearly identifiable in the relationships established between the female spectator and speaker. These ideas are brought to fruition in Bien à moi, La nef des sorcières and Les vaches de nuit, where an alternative female community is constructed for the speaker and spectator.

Marie Savard's Bien à moi is aligned with the feminist agenda which seeks to free women from patriarchal bondage by first freeing their bodies. La Marquise touches her body and then touches paper with ink. Though La Marquise's thoughts are written to herself (as they would have been in a diary), she also cries specifically for her female spectators. Her words are read and made public ("Ecrire-Crier", Chapter One and Three). La Marquise emerges crying in public. She is, in effect, no longer alone; her "bébites" are no longer the subject of whispers and medical reports. Her exposure becomes an intimate sharing and a sense of a female community is created.

> SI J'EN PARLE AUJOURD'HUI, C'EST QUE JE TROUVE QUE CELA EST DEVENU UNE SITUATION PRESQUE TENABLE ET JE ME DEMANDE CE QUI POURRAIT EN ETRE CHANGE AU NIVEAU EVENEMENTIEL DE MES MASSES POPULAIRES. (24)

Her solitude is alleviated through theatrical production as is the solitude of those who watch her. Together, the speaker and female spectator identify with their desire.

The text is different from A Particular Class of Women in that the speaker is active, as opposed to acted upon. By positing female desire as the subject and form of the representation, the piece constructs an ideal female spectator and rejects the gaze of a male voyeur. There is no opportunity to satisfy the male gaze as the male spectator is (in a very political reversal of fortune) left silent and unrepresented. Savard expects of her female listener what la Marquise expects of herself: "la perspicacité à déshabiller la plus obscure des symboles...." (31). The spectator must watch la Marquise "undo her" buttons in order to participate in what lies beneath, not consume or devour it. As la Marquise strips off her layers of memory , the spectator must grapple with the discoveries as la Marquise does.

However, the only listener actually recognized by the text is La Marquise herself, as the creative coming to words is implicitly linked with the solitary act of masturbation. Under such conditions the spectator is outside of the private space, peeping in at the aroused woman, as if through the window or keyhole. All that the spectator sees is scopophelic or stolen from the speaker's private space. It is because of this voyeuristic positioning that the play has problematic potential in a feminist analysis which seeks to undermine the male gaze. The question for the feminist critic is, can this be presented on stage without indulging the sensational? If a woman is presented in the act of masturbation does this not (despite her coming to know herself) risk the same objectification of the female body apparent in the peep show? Returning to Dolan's argument, the female body is never "sign free," and many performers fail to recognize that the "female body still participates in a male-oriented signifying practice."[14] Though the representation may be directed exclusively to the female spectator (or alternatively ask the male spectator to assume a female gaze), the audience in general still retains the authority to fix meaning upon the body of the performer. A play like Savard's Bien à moi may seek to liberate images of women from the male gaze, but in effect it cannot control spectatorship to the point of assuring that the image is detached from scopophelic oppression. What exactly does one do with the "non-ideal spectator"?

Bien à moi was first performed at Théâtre Quat' Sous, in a double bill with Michel Tremblay's one-man show about a transvestite, La Duchesse de Langeais. The theatre, at the time, was known for its experimental work and willingness to take risks. Critic Michel Bélair warns his readers that the performances are not for those who do not believe that the theatre is a space where all can be voiced. Quat' Sous is not for the weak at heart (or for those who have a tendency to blush).[15] However, though it is probable that Savard found her ideal spectators in the audience of the Quat' Sous, the inherent possibilities that the play opens up to the peeping Tom cannot be disregarded. As Dolan puts it, "The Artaudian plea for breathing new life into theatre through the female body-presence is more poetic than practical, since it is impossible to translate it theatrically without getting caught in the contradictions of women's place in representation."[16]

The sympathetic audience that Savard had for her opening could not have been a given for the collective of La nef des sorcières which played at Théâtre du nouveau monde, one of Montreal's mainstream commercial theatres. Louise Forsyth argues that in these conditions the six women of La nef des sorcières "speak in imagination to a large number of people who have been part of their personal experience:"

> Forming the permanent backdrop to these various orientations is the relationship sustained between the actresses and the audience, which is addressed directly as "vous".[17]

Forsyth argues that, in most of the monologues, the actors are overtly political and create conflict between themselves and their public. They attack the audience aggressively as they announce that the time for change has come. In Forsyth's analysis, the audience is collectively pronounced guilty of subjecting women to silence. Forsyth's theory is similar to the argument that I presented for Diving, Preparing, and Pink.

There is evidence enough to support Forsyth. One can uncover in all of the monologues a bitterness and a force that stems from the frustrations and pain that each of these women has suffered in silence. Certainly there is anger, but is it really directed at the spectator, as it is in Preparing or Pink? If Adrien Gruslin's review records at all accurately the audience's reaction to the text, then Forsyth's conclusions have to be reevaluated. He says of Martha Blackburn's rendition of "Le retour de l'age":

> [L]e spectateur se laisse gagner par la beauté de l'écrit de Marthe Blackburn, il s'émeut du témoignage de cette femme dont "le teint ne rosit plus, le sang ne coule plus." Il écoute attentivement, on ne lui avait jamais parlé de cela surtout en ces termes-là! [18]

And of Louisette Dussault's "La Fille", Gruslin notes:

> Les spectateurs rient, le monologue se révèle plus accessible, le ton et le jeu trés vivant le font passer trop rapidement.[19]

This does not sound like the response of an audience being held responsible for patriarchy; rather, it indicates that the spectators have first of all identified with the speakers and secondly have returned the communication with either their attentiveness or their laughter.

The speaker of "la Fille" begins to identify the women that are outside of her space and she calls their names, reaching out to make contact with them:

> J'pense à: la femme d'en avant...celle qui a des enfants, la fille d'a côté, celle qui n'est pas mariée...la femme d'en bas, celle qu'on dit qu'a travaille pas...la fille d'en haut qui tape des lettres dans un bureau...la femme d'en arrière qui est bonne couturière... qui aurait bien aimé dev'nir infirmière.... (49-50)

She goes on to list more women who, like herself, are isolated in their own space and are uncovering their own monologues. As her thoughts go out to other women, the walls existing between speaker and female spectator disintegrate and contact is made.[20]

Similarly, Marcelle I initiates the female spectator to lesbian desire or love between women. Marcelle II trades in the accusatory "vous" for the more communal "nous", thereby inviting the female spectator into her lesbian space:

> Nous formons à nous toutes une société secrète.
>
> Personne le sait, mais chaque fois qu'une femme couche avec une autre femme, c'est une merveilleuse gifle qu'on lance à la tête de notre monde pourri. (70)

L'Ecrivain concludes the performance by saying that she is speaking of a political pact amongst women (79).

The monologues of La nef address themselves exclusively to the female spectator. Yvonne Mathews-Klein and Ann Pearson, spectators of the performance themselves, reported how the female spectator was engaged differently than the male:

> On both occasions that I saw the play, certain men in the audience felt compelled to audibly protest at this point [the Marcelle II monologue] and both times were forced to subside by a hiss of almost electrical intensity [from female spectators] which sizzled through the theatre. Pelletier's may have been a voice never heard on stage before, the audience wanted to hear it now. [21]

The conflict that Forsyth perceived to exist between audience and performance surfaces here in the behaviour of the male spectator excluded from the representation and disturbed by it. There is no focus for his gaze here.

La nef des sorcières is a fascinating example of the feminist performance-audience dynamic. A woman, isolated in her monologue, either consciously or unconsciously transcends the restrictions of her space and makes contact with the female spectator. Though each woman remains in her room, her story escapes through the walls and is given a public hearing. Here again is Mathews-Klein and Pearson's account:

> The terrible isolation in which each speaker stands and, indeed, in which each appears to rejoice, is disturbing. Yet, each time I saw the play, the connections were made nevertheless, between the

> actors and every woman in the audience who seemed to hear herself speaking out loud for the first time. La nef generates that immense, troubling exhilaration that we once experienced in consciousness-raising groups and does it with a random audience of women, the majority of whom have only the slightest connection with the women's movement. [22]

Gradually a collection of these stories accumulates in the memories of female spectators and the community envisaged by Jovette Marchessault enters the realm of possibility. In Les vaches de nuit the spectator is not directly addressed. However, the story is told within the "once upon a time" framework of fairy tales and oral history, and the assumption is made that there is an ear to hear. The representation addresses women exclusively. It is not concerned with providing an "in" for everybody. Women alone are invited to participate in its celebration. This ultimate suggestion of a female space for women and for women's desire is perhaps the most overtly political in its utter refusal to ignore the portion of society it designates the "ordre-des-castrants." As the female animals gathered around their mother crows, so female spectators gathered around Pol Pelletier at Théâtre du nouveau monde on the evening of 5 March, 1979 on the occasion of International Women's Day.[23] Pelletier's piece would have been like the first part of a choral song with the spectators' voices/dialogues taking over following her performance.

Sue Ellen Case suggests that within patriarchal culture the only way that certain elements of women's experience can be signified for the audience is through the exclusion of the male spectator:

> The insistence upon an all-women audience, then, becomes an essential part of the composition of the theatrical event, rather than a social statement of separatism or reverse sexism. [...] The gender, class and colour of the audience replace the aesthetic traditions of form or the isolated conditions of the author's intent within the interpretive strategies of dramatic theory, firmly allying poetics with feminist politics. [24]

Together the female speaker and spectator attempt to transform the theatre into a common space for their mutual subjectivity. Female spectators "ne peut qu'apprendre à se rappeler, chacune à son tour" (92). A communion is created and celebrated:

> Entre les dames corneilles et les mammifères, à chaque fois c'est la fête, la joie des retrouvailles, tous les embrassements du corps et de la mémoire. (91)

There can be no arguing that Marie Savard, Jovette Marchessault, the collective of La nef des sorcières and to a lesser degree Louisette Dussault and Jeanne-Mance Delisle construct the spectator differently. The spectator is not named guilty from the start or constructed as a part of a homogeneous mass representative of the dominant culture. Neither is the spectator constructed as a confidant present to listen to a personal revelation. Evident in all of these plays, though particularly in Les vaches, is the sense that both spectator and speaker are alike. They participate in the same community and share the same collective history. There is undoubtably a connection between this and the strong sense of solidarity that exists within the community of feminist artists in Quebec (Introduction). These women do not write alone, but within a community and for each other. Contact is made between women, and silent bodies learn to speak together.

Each of the preceding chapters has articulated the urgent need to render the personal and private, public and political through a re-presentation of what has traditionally constituted the authoritative vision. This chapter has attempted to suggest that these re-definitions are intimately connected to the kind of relationship the play attempts to establish with the audience. Austin Quigley argues that while the theatre offers the potential to represent reality critically, or alternatively, to re-imagine reality, the "radical divisions between pluralistic domains are not represented as insurmountable to the audience." [25] The woman's monodrama does not exist merely as an autonomous game of solitaire on the stage. The presence of the audience is necessary to her performance because it makes her personal revelation public and political. More importantly, her monodrama opens itself up to the particular female gaze. Nothing is secret any more, for crucial to her act of "playing solitaire" is the presence of other women. It is with the female spectator that the theatrical communication begins and ends.

NOTES

[1] Keir Elam, The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama (New York and London: Methuen, 1980)95-97.

[2] Sue Ellen Case, Feminism and Theatre (London: MacMillan, 1988)116.

[3] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen 16.3 (1975):59-60.

[4] Case 120.

[5] Mulvey 62.

[6] Jill Dolan, The Feminist Spectator as Critic (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1988)1.

[7] Dolan 2.

[8] Dolan 1-2 .

[9] In my quest for the "ideal" spectator in the woman's monodrama, I found myself drawn, in many of the texts, to the dramaturgically constructed presence of a "listener". It is clear that not all of these monologues are examples of women talking to themselves. In many of the cases the speaker either imagines a listener or a convention is set up establishing the presence of an unseen listener. Questions arise pertaining to the identity of this listener -who is he/she? Where is he/she? What does he/she want? How is this listener constructed by the values and ideals proposed by the piece? Is the spectator-listener different from the listener imagined by the speaker?

[10] Reg Skene, "Nurse's Journey Related with Dramatic Effect," rev. of The Occupation of Heather Rose, by Wendy Lill, Prairie Theatre Exchange, Winnipeg, Winnipeg Free Press 28 Feb 1986: 34.

[11] Ray Conologue, "Jewel Shines with Unexpected Quality," rev. of Jewel, by Joan MacLeod, Tarragon Theatre, Toronto, The Globe and Mail 27 April 1987: C12.

[12] Louisette Dussault, "Itinéraire pour une Moman," introduction, Moman by Dussault (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1981) 32.

[13] Nicole Brossard opens her text L'Amer (Montréal: Hexagone, 1977)7, with the statement "J'ai tué le ventre."

[14] Dolan 83.

[15] Michel Bélair, "La Marquise et la Duchesse: deux grandes soeurs," rev. of Bien à moi, by Marie Savard, Théâtre de Quat' Sous, Le Devoir 21 Fev. 1970: 17.

[16] Dolan 97.

[17] Louise Forsyth, "First Person Singular: Monologues by Women in Several Modern Quebec Plays," Canadian Drama 5 (Fall 1979):191.

[18] Adrien Gruslin, "Treize femmes en colère," rev. of La nef des sorcières by Brossard et al, Théâtre du nouveau monde, Montreal, Le Devoir 11 March 1976:12.

[19] Gruslin 12.

[20] It should be noted that "Actrice", "La Fille" and "Marcelle II" were all performed by the woman who wrote them. The particular dynamic of "self-performance" noted in Feindel's, Boyd's and MacLeod's plays would further increase the intimacy between speaker and spectator in these monologues.

[21] Yvonne Mathews-Klein and Ann Pearson. "A Stage of Seven Women," rev. of La nef des sorcières, by Brossard et al, Théâtre du nouveau monde, Montreal, Branching Out 3 (Sept-Oct. 1974)19.

[22] Mathews-Klein and Pearson 19.

[23] Both Jean Royer ("Le théâtre au féminin de la fête," rev. of Les vaches de nuit, by Jovette Marchessault, Théâtre du nouveau monde, Montréal Le Devoir 7 mars 1979: 16) and Andrée Lebel (Un spectacle beau par sa simplicité," rev. of Les vaches de nuit La

Presse 6 mars, 1979: 67) document that the audience was made up mostly of women with a few men.

[24] Case 116.

[25] Austin E. Quigley, The Modern Stage and Other Worlds (New York and London:Methuen, 1985)45.

CONCLUSION

I began this thesis with the assumption that women in general, and women in the theatre in particular, have been silenced. Women's voices have been drowned by the clamour of patriarchal authority that dominates virtually all levels of society. Women suffer from amnesia because their experiences and endeavours have been conveniently forgotten from the pages of historical documentation. Women have been actors in a very large play written by patriarchy. The costumes of subservience and passivity have come between women's bodies and their desires. Women have been kept prisoners in a wilderness marked out by walls that they did not erect. Their personal space has been marginalized and forgotten, yet rendered escape-proof. Women are ex-centric, confined to the private world and finitely separated from the public world. In this space they stand alone, playing solitaire.

The monodrama is at once a private expression and a public speech which seeks to reestablish the personal lives of women as central and political. But to speak alone is mad or hysterical. Only eccentric women speak to themselves. Manfred Pfister says that "in the real world... talking in this manner (alone) for too long is generally thought to be a pathological deviation from the norm and those who are not pathologically disturbed generally restrict their thinking aloud to brief exclamations."[1] The monodrama, therefore, takes that which is pathological or eccentric and transforms it into a normative form of communication. It re-centres the ex-centric. Through a common convention of the theatre, behaviour that was marginal or deviant becomes empowered, sanctioned discourse. Nicole Brossard and France Théoret believe: "L'isolement provisoire et stratégique du monologue permet à la fois de ne pas tout égaliser et de ne pas tout réduire."[2]

Whether she begins from the North, the strip, the feminist writer's group or the kitchen, the playwright has begun to write over her invisibility and to invent herself into culture. Each speaker tries her tongue. Each re-collects her memories and pieces together her stories. Fingers tentatively touch bodies and desire is discovered. Each re-defines her ex-centric space of marginality as a place of possibility.

Moreover, in different ways and to varying degrees these playwrights have undermined the "authorities" of the centre that teach silence. "Identity" as a fixed and finite entity is questioned as character and playwright merge and monodrama becomes the process of self-invention. "History" as pre-text is undermined as her-story is woven through text. "Humanity" is deconstructed into a series of gender-coded roles that are revealed as subservient to patriarchal ideology. The female body is re-dressed as representation re-figures female desire. Space is explored as "property" or as the infrastructure that sustains ideological systems of oppression. "Other" worlds are represented in the celebration of women's space. Theatrical representation itself is questioned as the playwright-director-actor triumvirate is disrupted by a coup that posits the spectator as complicit in the representation. The woman's monodrama does not merely hold a mirror up to the gazing spectators; it re-invents them, re-constitutes them as they work simultaneously to lend meaning to the representation.

"The paradox of underlining and undermining cultural universals (of revealing their grounding in the "particular")," says Linda Hutcheon, "implicitly challenges any notions of centrality in culture."[3] By re-centring the ex-centric (eccentric), the centre is transformed. Sue Ellen Case, contextualizing contemporary theatre in a post-modern world, notes the importance of such a re-creation:

> At this point in history, psychosemiotic strategies may provide a new kind of revolution, for in the late twentieth century the mode of production which is central to the oppression of many peoples lies within the ghettos of signs and codes. In the age of television, computer languages, and communication satellites, the production of

> signs creates the sense of what a person is, rather than reflects it. This condition means that artists and cultural theorists may be the activists and the revolutionaries. Modes of discourse and representation may replace the Molotov cocktail.[4]

Whether consciously or not the personal labours of each of these playwrights is subversively political. If we throw out Aristotle's mirror once and for all and believe that representation actually constitutes culture rather than reflects it, then the theatrical representation of the ex-centric/eccentric becomes a significant act. If we learn that "universals" are euphemistic descriptions of the dominant ideology, then we learn to be curious about that which is different. If we learn that we are multiple, diverse, and constantly in the process of re-inventing ourselves, then we learn to tolerate that difference.

I have shied away from making specific observations on the importance or relevance of these works to Canada and to Canadian theatre. I feel there are important connections to be made, but these are the subject of yet another study. One point can be made in conclusion, however. Hutcheon suggests that since the periphery or the margin might also describe Canada's perceived position in international terms, perhaps the post-modern ex-centric is very much a part of the identity of the nation.[5] Robert Wallace, approaching theatrical representation from a similar perspective, argues that marginality (eccentricism) can be viewed not only as an attitude, "but as a historical condition constructed by the dominant culture and upheld by those who fail to question and resist its efficacy. Ironically, once this understanding is achieved, marginality can cease to be regarded as a liability and be reconstructed as a value - can be "reformed" as a strength that can prefigure historical change."[6]

Though still the proverbial short stick, "playing solitaire" is nothing less than subversive.

NOTES

[1] Manfred Pfister, The Theory and Analysis of Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)131-2.

[2] Nicole Brossard, and France Théoret, Préface, La nef des sorcières, by Brossard et al. (Montréal: Quinze, 1976) 13.

[3] Linda Hutcheon, The Canadian Post-Modern (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1988) 3.

[4] Sue Ellen Case, Feminism and Theatre (London: MacMillan, 1988)132.

[5] Hutcheon 3.

[6] Robert Wallace, Producing Marginality: Theatre and Criticism in Canada (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1990)29-30.

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